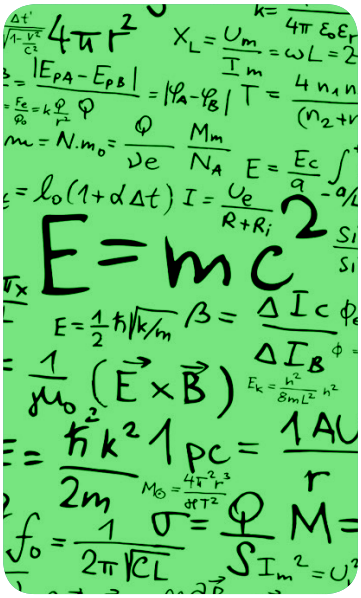

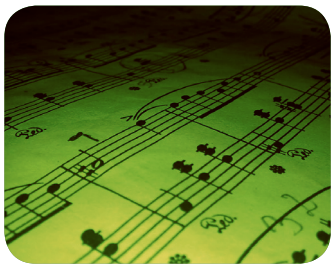

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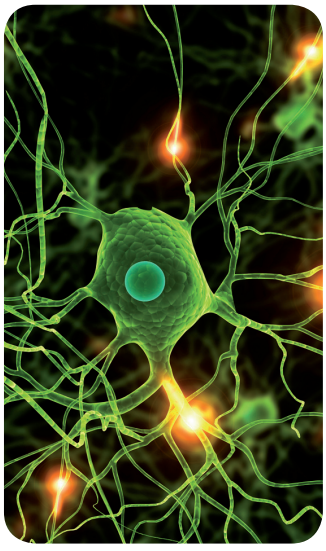

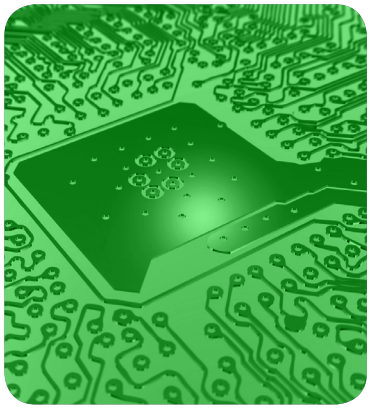

Ann-Marie MacDonald's Discourse of Reconciliation. The Politics of Dissociation between Gender and Genre in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Helena Sánchez Gayoso

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“Comedy is not designed to condemn evil, but to ridicule a lack of self-knowledge… The normal individual is freed from the bonds of a humorous [i.e., unbalanced] society, and a normal society is freed from the bonds imposed on it by humorous individuals”

-Northrop Frye in “The Argument of Comedy” (1949)

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1. Introduction

Premiered in Toronto's Annex Theatre in 1988 and published in 1990, Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* has taken the Canadian stage by storm, becoming "the most famous, as well as the most mainstream, of Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare" (Harrington 2007, 126). There are a variety of reasons that serve to justify this bold statement. After first being commissioned and produced by Nightwood Theatre, the play has been performed about forty times in Canada and abroad, and MacDonald has achieved many important recognitions -such as the Governor General's Award, the Floyd S. Chalmers Canadian Play Award, and the Canadian Authors Association Award. This comedy is avidly read in universities all around the world (it has been translated into 19 different languages), and the critical community has praised it since its publication. MacDonald's complete literary production appeals to a wide variety of readers (readers of popular culture, as well as of canonical culture), which is not strange bearing in mind that her technique is comic but at the same time complex, eclectic yet forceful, critical yet conciliatory. Although at first sight it may seem that her style is youthful, this façade hides very powerful and serious intellectual concerns that mainly operate in the fields of postmodernism, postcolonialism, and feminism, among others. Since her voice as a female writer is so powerful and her sharp gaze focuses on topics so rich in meaning, imagery, and symbolism, it is a difficult if not impossible task to categorise her literary production according to literary labels. Nonetheless, it could be safely argued that her entire oeuvre -encompassing her complete work- is crafted in bringing voices from different backgrounds (even from distant historical periods) into dialogue in order to include the marginalised or silent "other" into the realm of hegemonic modes of discourse. In other words, MacDonald's entire literary body challenges what she considers Western patriarchal discourses, most prominently the English Canon, the teachings of the Catholic Church, and History, in order to include the muted voices of the marginalised in terms of gender, race, class, and religion. Her status as immigrant is central in order to understand the core of her aforementioned literary crusade. As she explained,

> [T]he marginalised people have a lot to teach about the centre. And it's interesting because I think my own immigrant background is all about wanting to seize the mainstream, but not to be obliterated by it. I want to seize it, and I want to become part of it, and I want to change it, and I want to say it's mine too, and I'm different (quoted in Lockhart 2005, 156).

It would be mistaken, however, to argue that MacDonald is being antagonistic to authority. Conversations between the marginalised and the mainstream should not be limited by this struggle for acceptance, but they must be directed towards (re)creation. She continues:

> But I don't want to bomb all the old buildings -in fact I love them, could I please have a room in one of them? And it's going to be very different once I'm there. It's all about creation and transformation as opposed to destruction (quoted in Lockhart 2005, 156).

Her endeavour, then, does not aim at the merging of dominant and "othered" discourses, but at the reconciliation between the opposite ends of a variety of spectrums. As she expressed in an interview with Eva Tihanyi, "you can try to resist reconciliation -at your peril. But it's going to happen, something's going to be born. Something's going to come together" (quoted in "Books in Canada" 2016). *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* could perfectly be considered this "something" that is born after confronting and reconciliating with the English literary canon, that is undoubtedly (and has historically been) heavily influenced by Shakespeare. The comedic play tells the story of Constance Ledbelly, an insecure English literature assistant professor at Queen's University who is doing her PhD on two of the most well-known Shakespearean tragedies: *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. After having found a manuscript by a physicist called Gustav, she not only starts to question their authorship, but she also firmly believes that these tragedies were originally written as comedies, before Shakespeare supressed the comic fool character. After despotic Professor Claude Night criticises her dissertation, Constance sets out on a subconscious journey in order to, firstly, find the wise fool in the tragedies, and, secondly, to save Desdemona and Juliet from their tragic fates. However, most importantly, the journey she embarks on is also one towards self-discovery, or a quest for identity. Constance is thus faced with a greater challenge; she must re-define two of the most important archetypes that have had an enormous influence on women's identity in literature, as well as in the field of cultural representation, in order to find her true self.

Taking into account Nightwood Theatre's artistic emblem to "develop and produce innovative Canadian Theatre" ("Nightwood Theatre"), it is not strange that they were the first to premiere *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. But before going deeper, its origins should be firstly traced in order to frame MacDonald's work and career as a Canadian playwright, as well as to understand the importance of Nightwood's Theatre's feminist agenda.

After the Massey Commission's Report of 1951, which "crystallised the growing post-war determination that Canada should develop an internationally recognised culture" (Groome 2002, 103), the Canadian stage was overwhelmed by the establishment of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada, based on the British theatrical model of Old Vic and the Royal Shakespeare's Company. Stratford, then, became "the focal point of Canadian high culture, with Shakespeare standing as both civilising instrument and cultural authority" (Harrington 2007, 124), on the "necessity for Canada to produce Shakespeare as the appropriate way to introduce Canadians to their cultural traditions" (Groome 2002, 126). One could argue, then, that Shakespeare (and Ontario) became the heart of the Canadian theatrical stage, which reflected what is referred to as 'family compact', or, as Louise Harrington defines as "the informal name for the wealthy, conservative, Protestant elite of the early nineteenth-century Upper Canada" (2007, 125). The initial cultural establishment of Shakespeare in Canada -fertilised in Stratford- hid a political agenda based on British "cultural imperialism and class dominance" (Harrington 2007, 125). Shakespeare first appearance on Canadian stage, hence, could be considered another engine for colonial dominance.

Stratford established the path for the Canadian theatrical landscape that would not change until the 1970s and 1980s -the decades that started to audience the emergence of a new kind of counterculture theatre that would attack the British colonial values of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival. For the first time in the history of Canadian theatre (it is important to remember that until the 1960 there were no native plays produced locally)[1] the theatrical scene saw the emergence of adaptations and even parodies of Shakespeare's plays, which indeed "confronted the overriding 'Britishness' of Stratfordian Shakespeare" (Harrington 2007, 125). A great deal of examples could be introduced, but the most revealing and witty titles considering the focus of this paper are: Suzanne Finlay's *Queenie O'Leary* (1989), Kate Johnson and Mark Leiven-Young's *The Oprah Donahue Show (Talks about 'Fatal Attractions' with Special Guests Juliet, the Shrew, Lady Macbeth, and Hamlet's Mom)* (1988), and Normand Chaurette's *Les Reines (Richard III)*. Along the same lines as Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, these plays "create new texts in which the old stories are re-imagined and reinterpreted form formerly excluded perspectives" (Burnett 2002, 6).

[1] See Glaap, Albert-Reiner. 1999. "The Evolution of English-Canadian Drama in the Twentieth Century." *Twentieth-Century Theatre and Drama in English*: 793-815.

Founded in 1979 by Cynthia Grant, Kim Renders, Mary Vingoe and Maureen White, Nightwood Theatre is the oldest feminist professional women's theatre company in Canada, and one of the most -if not the most- influential theatre companies in Toronto that emphasises the production of collective work so as to strengthen the role of the female artist in contemporary Canadian theatre. MacDonald's voice and concerns as a woman writer fit too well in the theatre's alliance to challenge "stereotypes and social assumptions about gender, race, and sexuality". Its mandate and mission of forging "creative alliances among women artists from diverse backgrounds in order to produce innovative Canadian Theatre", as well as its leading vision of "propelling women on the top of their craft in Canadian Theatre" ("Nightwood Theatre"), offer a suitable platform to channel and launch to fame the voices of emerging female writers who challenge -among other things- 20th-century interpretations of Shakespeare's discourse. *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*'s reception in Canada was an enormous success that can be appreciated by the rain of gold reviews that it received, being praised as "one of the wildest and woolliest feminist reappraisals that the theatre has seen, and one of the most intellectually ambitious" (Posner 2009) in which the author "delivers her message with tremendous wit, breath-taking wordplay and great gusts of knee-slapping bread comedy" (Langston 2013).

Stemming from this contemporary rewriting of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, this paper aims to analyse *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* in the light of what I have defined as MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation between dominant and marginalised discourses. This play stands as the perfect example to demonstrate how the three key elements of *dialogism*[2] (bringing into dialogue the distanced voices of the mainstream and the margins), *inclusion* of historically muted voices into hegemonic discourses, and *reconciliation* of opposites represent the progression that the reader encounters in the process of building alternative but equally meaningful subjectivities. Far from being a structural analysis, however, this research will show how these three stages are recurrent in the process of constructing the (re)new(ed) identities of the most relevant female characters of the play: Desdemona, Juliet, and Constance. The present research is framed by feminism, although as has been previously mentioned, MacDonald's entire production is multifocal and *polyphonic*[3].

[2] The term *dialogism* makes explicit reference to M. M. Bakhtin's concept that he introduced in the essays collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*.
[3] Similarly, the term *polyphonic* makes explicit reference to M. M. Bakhtin's concept that he introduced in the essays collected in *The Dialogic Imagination*.

1.1 Third-Wave Feminism and the Need for a Theoretical Background

Third-wave feminism is a very suitable framework in which to base the present analysis, since, in contrast with the First and Second Wave, its focus is on the language used to define women's identity, as well as their representation in media/literature through different -and often stigmatised- stereotypes/archetypes (as for instance Juliet or Desdemona). Beginning in the 1990s and continuing into to the present, Third-wave feminism stands as the present historical and natural progression of feminist activity. After the period of the First-wave (19th and 20th century) and Second-wave (1960s-1980s), when feminist activity fought for the right to vote and overcame major obstacles in relation to the legal and civil situation of women respectively, the Third-wave broadened its horizons of action so as to include women from different nationalities, religions, backgrounds, races, and so on. Apart from the difficulties that this ambitious endeavour entails regarding the need to embrace the rich and wide diversity of women's subjectivities into a unique platform of action, today's feminism is forced to face a greater challenge: nowadays the term seems to imply radicalisation, or more importantly, some scholars believe that the concept "feminism" has become obsolete to fit the needs of women's problems in the contemporary world, precisely because of the negative imaginary and stereotypes attached to it (see Baumgardner and Richards 2000).

In the core of the debate between the need for action and institutionalised silence, Rebecca Walker, in her 1992 essay "Becoming the Third Wave", stated: "I am not a postfeminist. I am the Third Wave" (41). This disconformity, however, works beyond the boundaries of the new needs of feminism at that time. The Third-wave movement appeared at a moment when poststructuralism and postmodernism started to gain strength. In fact, many parallels can be drawn between the feminist movement and these trends, since they work within the paradigms of the same concepts, among them "language, discourse, difference, and deconstruction" (Scott 1988, 34). Nevertheless, as Craig Owens discusses, postmodernism[4] neglects to include the "insistent feminist voice" suggesting that it "may be another masculine invention engineered to exclude women" (1983, 61). Rebecca Walker had already advanced the perils of defining the women's fight with feminist terminology, precisely because of the little support that the movement would gain from the critical community. As Joan W. Scott

[4] Poststructuralism and postmodernism are linked on purpose, since feminist anxieties have not been included explicitly into both realms. Although women writers and critics (specially regarding poststructuralism with figures such as Judith Butler or Julia Kristeva) have taken part in the development of both trends, these movements have mainly worked within the sphere of the dominant patriarchal discourse. That could explain why Third-wave feminism lacks a unifying theoretical framework.

expresses "[t]hat feminism needs theory goes without saying (perhaps because it has been said so often)" (1988, 33). Scott, however, is sceptical (very much like Rebecca Walker) regarding the appliance of theories and their purposes in relation to literary feminism: "[w]hat is not always clear is what theory will do" (1988, 33). Between destroying the patriarchal "old buildings" and "having a room in one of them", Scott moves along the same lines as Ann-Marie MacDonald and her desire for reconciliation of opposites, when Scott argues that

> We need theory that will let us think in terms of pluralities and diversities rather than of unities and universals. We need theory that will break the conceptual hold, at least, of those long traditions of (Western) philosophy that have systematically and repeatedly constructed the world hierarchically in terms of masculine universals and feminine specificities. We need theory that will enable us to articulate alternative ways of thinking about (and thus acting upon) gender without either simply reversing the old hierarchies or confirming them (1988, 33).

In the core of this literary debate between being oppositional or conciliatory towards patriarchal authority in the context of the Third-wave, it could be asserted that M. M. Bakhtin's concepts of *dialogism*, *double-voice discourse* and especially the *carnivalesque* can provide new "useful vocabulary and a new perspective from which to examine the central tensions between men and women's writing" (Yeager 1984, 956). Although Bakhtin cannot be considered a feminist philosopher, it is undeniable that his theory of the novelistic discourse can be used to give a powerful theoretical framework that could suit the needs of the literary concerns of Third-wave feminism, as well as to empower an accurate representation of women's subjectivities -as will be seen in this analysis of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. This research has been influenced by feminist appropriations of Bakhtin, the most prominent ones being *Feminism, Bakhtin, and the Dialogic* by S. Jaret McKinstry and edited by Dale M. Bauer, and *Feminist Dialogics: A Theory of Failed Community* by Dale M. Bauer. Significantly, Bakhtin's theory has rarely been related to the theatrical genre. Thus, this paper will show how MacDonald's feminist theatre -best represented in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*- opens a new door that is worth exploring: this play can be a good example to show how to use an appropriate theoretical framework (Bakhtin) that provides an effective method to fight patriarchal domination in the context of the Third-wave without undermining neither the play's feminist thematic concerns nor silencing the male voice. In this case, we know what Bakhtin "will do": MacDonald is not only able to populate Shakespeare's language with feminist meaning, but, without rejecting patriarchal modes of expression, she finds a voice of women's own. Her key

achievement, thus, is the constructing of new spaces (such as this comedic play) that are not combative, but willing to dialogue with the dominant masculine. MacDonald's comedy, moreover, presents a more innovative and entertaining platform through which to send unbiased feminist messages than can reach a more diverse and broader public.

Before moving to the analysis of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, the connection between Bakhtin's theories and the Third-wave's interests should be drawn. If one has a look at the index of *The Dialogic Imagination* soon realises that only three women writers are included -Ann Radcliffe, de Lafayette, and de Scudery. It is quite evident then that "the novelistic language Bakhtin described has nothing to do with either women or the feminine, and feminine language is not necessarily tied to the novel" (Herndl 1991, 7), but both feminism and Bakhtin have worked within the threshold of the same concepts, among them "language". Language, hence, should be the point of departure, because, on the one hand, it is one of the concepts that feminism has taken from poststructuralism. On the other hand, it is the core of Bakhtin's theory of the novelistic discourse. As Joan W. Scott argues, "words and texts have no fixed or intrinsic meanings, [and] there is no transparent or self-evident relationship between them and either ideas or things, no basic correspondence between language and the world" (1988, 35).

Language is presented as something dynamic, and, since it is a tool "through which meaning is constructed" and "identity is established" (Scott 1988, 34), it can also serve to deconstruct dominant modes of discourse. From this dynamism, language could be defined as being *dialogic* and *multivocal*. *Dialogic* in the sense that language never works in isolation, it "is never unitary. It is unitary only as an abstract grammatical system of normative forms" (Bakhtin 1981, 288). *Multivocal* because "every utterance participates in the "unitary language" (in its centripetal forces and tendencies) and at the same time partakes of social and historical heteroglossia (the centrifugal, stratifying forces)" (Bakhtin 1981, 272). From this "on-going struggle between centripetal and centrifugal forces of language which can be symbolized by the opposition between monologic and dialogic utterance" (Allen [2000] 2011, 21), Bakhtin develops his theory of *dialogism* and other concepts that support or complement it, such as *double-voiced discourse*, and the *carnivalesque*.

In the *Dialogic Imagination*, Bakhtin establishes the basis of his theory of the novelistic discourse, where the novel is understood as the unofficial genre, while poetics or the epic are literary manifestations that stand for the authoritative discourse. He explains that

while “poetics serve one and the same project of centralizing and unifying European languages” (1981, 271), the novel “does not fit within the frame provided by the concept of poetic discourse” (1981, 269). The novel, thus, is considered the unofficial genre because it “is associated with the eternally living element of unofficial language and unofficial thought” (1981, 20). In this sense, a relationship between the language of the dominant/authority and the language of the “othered”/dominated/silenced/oppressed can be appreciated. It would not seem too farfetched to argue that this dynamics based on binary oppositions can be applied to three dialogic relations: the first one relates to masculine and feminine discourses, the second one to the current state of the novel and theatre -a genre that has historically been regarded as inferior- and lastly to the age-old assumption that tragedy is a more valuable genre than comedy, or in Aristotelian words “Comedy aims at representing men as worse, Tragedy as better than in actual life” (1950, 5). Moreover, the connection between gender and genre is particularly relevant if Shakespeare is taken into account, since supposedly “Shakespeare’s tragedies are ‘masculine’”, while “conversely his comedies are ‘feminine’” (Harrington 2007, 127). Since feminine discourses, theatre, and comedy are in the same structural level, they “must use the same kind of language” (Herndl 1991, 8) in order to resist domination. Bakhtin explains that “what is realized in the novel is the process of coming to know one’s own language as it is perceived in someone else’s language, coming to know one’s own belief system in someone else’s system” (1981, 282). He continues:

> [A]s a living, socio-ideological concrete thing, as heteroglot opinion, language, for the individual consciousness, lies on the borderline between oneself and the other. The word in language is half someone else’s. It becomes “one’s own” only when the speaker populates it with his own intention, his own accent, when he appropriates the word, adapting it to his own semantic and expressive intention. Prior to this moment of appropriation, the word does not exist in neutral and impersonal language (it is not, after all, out of a dictionary that the speaker gets his words), but rather it exists in other people’s intentions: it is from there that one must take the word, and make it one’s own (1981, 293-294).

Thus, since patriarchal discourse (embracing both gender and genre) can be understood as a variant of dominant discourse, women need to find their voice through a process of linguistic appropriation. Bearing in mind that women’s language has always been in a position of exclusion or subordination, or in other words, centrifugal, their “discourse is one that works by opposition. In such a system of thought (a phallocentric, male-dominated system), woman is placed in the inferior position: Man/Woman”. In the system based on the tensions between “Speech/Silence, Presence/Absence, Logic/Madness” (Herndl 1991, 10),

women's language is "othered". An important issue should be raised here: what is the impact when women's language is not used following this masculine logic? This study will defend the thesis that since language is crowded with the meaning of others, it can never work in isolation (in a no man's land). At the end of her "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness", Showalter criticises an *écriture feminine* -feminist writing and criticism which operates outside the sphere of patriarchal discourse- for as

> The concept of a woman's text in the wild zone is a playful abstraction: in the reality to which we must address ourselves as critics, women's writing is a 'double-voiced discourse' that always embodies the social, literary, and cultural heritage of both the muted and the dominant (1986, 263).

Showalter appropriation of Bakhtin's terminology opens up the possibility of a dialogue and future reconciliation between marginalised and dominant identities/discourses, while at the same time acknowledges that any discourse always merges different discursive possibilities or points of view. Undoubtedly, MacDonald celebrates the polyphonic nature of discourse by including, bringing into dialogue, and reconciliating different subjectivities in her comedic play through the language of the dominant (not necessarily patriarchal). As Yeager asserts, although "women writers have begun to find voices; they continue to speak from within the confines of the mother 'father' tongue" (1984, 957). However, far from being a disadvantage, "women's writing [is] possible even within a world of partially humanized discourse" (Yeager 1984, 957). In this light, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* stands as a very appropriate example to show how the female voice is inscribed into the sphere of male literary production, which, as a result, is renewed. In resonance with Bakhtin's linguistic theory, MacDonald claims the recognition of the feminist subject/voice/language into the dominant discourse through the appropriation of Shakespeare's discourse, language, and archetypes. The difficult question, nonetheless, is the following: *how* can linguistic appropriations insert the female voice inside patriarchal discourses and still create an attractive piece of art that can have a strong impact outside the sphere of fe/male academic literary production and criticism? In other words, *how* can current feminist concerns be heard if they are hidden behind the mask of traditional patriarchal strategies? *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* provides an answer to these questions. As Denis Salter points out in his "Acting Shakespeare in Postcolonial Space" (1996), "How indeed can the postcolonial margins write, speak and act back to the imperial centre when trying to articulate themselves through the very language that itself partially constructs the problem of estrangement?" (154).

Throughout the next sections, this paper will try to answer these questions and to demonstrate how dramatic comedy offers an appropriate platform through which to reconcile with the Shakespearean canon at different levels -both generically and regarding gender. Beverley Curran's article "Mingling and Unmingling Opposites: Bending Genre and Gender in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*" has already tackled the relation between both genre and gender, but Curran's research is limited to a focus upon the figure of Constance as reader, while this study broadens the analysis in connection to the role played by many of the characters. Keir Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* will be used as the general methodological framework that will embrace the following sections. In order to show the dynamics between gender and genre, this paper will explore how MacDonald reconsiders the stock characters that Shakespeare revisited himself in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*. Since this research is framed by feminism, the focus of study will be set on MacDonald's reinterpretation of Juliet and Desdemona, respectively. This first chapter will examine the subversive and liberating use or role of language and intertext, since it is an important tool that MacDonald employs in rewriting Shakespeare's tragedies into a comedy. Although in her "Towards a Feminist Comedy", Shannon Hengen explores this topic, her research is limited to "comedy's power to transform audiences" (1995, 97). In this sense, it is again more directed towards the study of theatre than that of drama[5]. In the second chapter, close attention will be paid to Renaissance theatrical conventions of costume and its implications regarding both gender and genre -dramatic comedy- within the play. This aspect is to some extent the most original, because many previous studies have only considered the importance of dress in MacDonald's play in relation to the sexuality of characters, and not to Elizabethan politics of dress, which indeed is one of the crucial elements necessary to understand MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation. The third chapter is centred upon Constance's process towards individuation in relation to Bakhtin's notion of the *carnivalesque fool*. The dynamics between genre and gender will be mimicked again by analysing the well-known figure of the trickster. The last section will present the main conclusions of this paper and a possible topic for further research.

[5] Just a quick reminder of the difference between theatre and drama. Keir Elam centres upon the "theatrical of *performed text* and the written or *dramatic text* respectively" ([1980] 2002, 3) as two focuses for his semiotic approach. Although it would have been interesting to analyse the theatrical performance, this paper is centred upon the dramatic text, with the only exception of Kate Newby's last adaptation of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, which will be introduced in the second chapter.

2. From Tragedy to Comedy. An Insight on the New Juliet and Desdemona

Tyrone Guthiere -one of the most prominent and instrumental figures in the foundation of the Stratford Shakespearean Festival of Canada- once said: "I don't know how far it may be possible to interpret a classical play in a distinctly Canadian way" (quoted in Knowels 2004, 54). His desire to "institutionalise Shakespeare at the heart of Canadian theatrical culture" (Mackay 2002, 10) has been assaulted by the recent creation of a fertile ground that has prompted many Canadian adaptations of Shakespeare's best-known plays. *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* belongs to -and to some extent leads- this tradition of revisited texts that "make it possible to see Shakespearean plays as fictions and constructs rather than as masterful illuminations of trans-historical truths" (Mackay 2002, 11). Of course, Shakespearean adaptations can take different paths, but judging from many of the most relevant titles of this emerging counter authoritative Canadian drama[6], parody and humour are presented as the most successful strategies in order to rewrite Shakespeare's works.

The context of the carnival acquires central importance here. In his *Rabelais and His World*, Bakhtin argues that the novel can participate in the carnival of laughter, which he defines as the "celebrated temporary liberation form the prevailing truth and from the established order; it marked the suspension of all hierarchical rank, privileges, norms and prohibitions… the feast of becoming, change" (1984, 10). Women writers such as MacDonald illustrate Bauer's belief that they can "assert [their] defiant voice through carnival, the masquerade, the parody of the "official" lives [they] lead" (1988, 13). In fact, these techniques can be "read as peculiarly Canadian" (Harrington 2007, 131) in the realm of the emerging Canadian feminist theatre, to the extent that Shannon Hengen has come to coin the new label "Canadian feminist carnivalesque" (1995, 98). *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* partakes of this suspension of normatives from both the intertwined generic and gender perspective, in the sense that the dialogic relation with Shakespeare is established in light of "the age-old assumption that not only are Shakespeare's tragedies 'masculine' and conversely his comedies 'feminine', but that tragedy is intrinsically better and more valuable than other genres" (Harrington 2007, 127). MacDonald, thus, establishes a dialogue with

[6] A part from the titles provided in the introduction, we should highlight Kennedy Cathy MacKinnon and Yvette Nolan's *The Death of a Chief* (2006), David Bloom and Linda Quibell's *The Compleat Works of Love* (1994), *Rodeo and Julie-Ed* (1995) by Rick Miller, *richardthesecond* (2001) by Mathew MacFadzean, *It Was All A Dream: A Hip-Hopera* (2004) by Ben Taylor and Michelle Smith, and *Pyramus and Thisbe* (2004) by Arline Smith.

Shakespeare's discourse in order to subvert *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* into a comedy whose leading characters are women who have been subjected to the abuses of the patriarchal discourse of Academia.[7] It should be clarified that this paper is far from defining Shakespeare as a misogynistic, which does not seem to be MacDonald's objective, but the modern interpretation of the tragic heroines he created. As Sanders argues,

> If Shakespeare, in common with most of his contemporaries, tended to see women as defined and circumscribed in a patriarchal society by their roles as queens, wives, mothers, daughters, and lovers, his plays show that he was also capable of exploring both gender opposition and, more crucially, gender blurring ([1994] 2004, 162).

This "gender opposition" and "gender blurring" that Shakespeare was pretty fond of but whose importance has tried to be overlooked by the world of Academia is recuperated in MacDonald's play. Before deepening on the dissolution of the gender construction, the new Juliet and Desdemona should be introduced so as to have a better insight on MacDonald's project of deconstructing female stereotypes, as well as to make the dissolution of the gender construct more apparent. The following two examples support this point. When Constance encounters Juliet, she has in mind the stereotypical image of Juliet as "the essence of first love-, of beauty that will never fade, of passion that will never die". When Constance asks Juliet:

> CONSTANCE What happens though, if love itself should die?
> JULIET When love goes to its grave before we do,
> then find another love from whom to die,
> and swear to end life first when next we love (64-65).

Judging from Juliet's reply, then, the reader realises that Juliet is much more empowered, since she is not presented as a naïve thirteen-year-old girl who is defined by the Petrarchan ideal of love and marriage, although her obsession with dying for love is still there. What is undeniable is that the recontextualisation of Juliet in a comedic play forces reconsideration. But the renewed image of Desdemona is a much more powerful example. When Constance encounters Desdemona, who humorously believes that Constance "commands the legion of Academe from Lecture Stands that [Professor Night] usurped" (36), the protagonist explains to Desdemona that she has also been a victim of the discourse of Academia, for the

[7] It should be added that not only female characters originally taken from Shakespeare's plays are subverted; Romeo, Othello, Tybalt, and Mercutio are also reconsidered, but since Desdemona and Juliet could be defined as the co-protagonists of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, and MacDonald's play engages in the dynamics of gender and genre, Juliet and Desdemona become the most suitable examples to strengthen MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation with Shakespeare.

community “believes that [she is] a doomed and helpless victim” (38). This idea finds its roots in the original Shakespearean scene where Desdemona is summoned before the Senate to give account of her disobedience. Brabantio is utterly unable to fully understand her daughter’s rebellion with his notion of her as a female ideal:

> A maiden never bold,
> Of spirit so still and quiet that her motion
> Blushed at herself: and she, in spite of nature,
> Of years, of country, credit, everything,
> To fall in love with what she feared to look on! (Shakespeare 2007, 2095).

Due to his inability to understand her daughter’s mischievous behaviour -for she is “not deficient, blind, or lame of sense”- he can only ascribe her disobedience to “witchcraft” (Shakespeare 2007, 2094) on the part of Othello. Desdemona’s defence in the Senate and the whole tone of her argument anticipates that “she has acted as a free agent, asserting the right to fulfilment of her own desire” (Neill 2006, 170). Of course, Desdemona insists that now her duty is with her husband, changing her role from daughter to wife:

> And so much duty as my mother showed
> To you, preferring you before her father,
> So much I challenge that I may profess
> Due to the Moor my lord (Shakespeare 2007, 2097).

This image of Desdemona as the quintessentially image of feminine subjugation -note words such as “duty”, “bound” and “due”- has been imposed over the other façade of her personality as brave Desdemona. Her desire for challenge in her ambitious project of accompanying Othello to war, which is by no means justified by her presumably feminine passivity, has been overshadowed by the stereotypical image that Constance -and we as readers of Shakespeare- has in mind when she finds Desdemona in Cyprus, that of a “helpless victim”. But Constance, in her first meeting with Othello, envisions a renewed conception of Desdemona, and in doing so recovers a harmonious balance in her characterisation, interpretation and reception.

> CONSTANCE Desdemona fell in love with you,
> because she loved to hear you talk of war.
> OTHELLO *These things to hear she seriously inclined.*
> CONSTANCE I’ve always thought she had a violent streak,
> and that she lived vicariously through you,
> but no one else sees eye to eye with me.
> Yet I maintain, she did elope with you,
> and sailed across a war zone just to live
> in this armed camp, therefore - [*Aside*] He’s not a
> Moor.

When Desdemona realises that she has historically been analysed in the light of feminine submission, she cannot restrain herself when she lists all her deeds in an open attack to Academia:

> Did I not beat a path into the fray,
> my vow to honour in thy fool's cap quest?
> Did I not flee my father, here to dwell
> beneath the sword Hephaestus forged for Mars?
> Will I not dive into Sargasso Sea,
> to serve abreast the Amazons abroad?
> Will I not butcher any cow that dares
> low lies call me tame, ay that I will
> So raise I now the battle cry, *Bullshit!!* (38).

Indeed, Shakespeare's Desdemona has long been considered a "helpless victim", an object of her father and husband's patriarchal forces. However, in the original *Othello* the main action is bracketed not only by "the protagonist's two great demonstrations of obedience to Venice" -his departure to confront "the general enemy Ottoman" and his killing of the "malignant… Turk" (Shakespeare 2007, 2094), but "it is likewise framed by two conspicuous acts of female disobedience" -Desdemona's defiance of her father's will, and Emilia's refusal of her husband's commands". Thus, one could argue that the place of women in *Othello* is to some extent an anomalous one, for "while the manuals of household government typically imagined the social order in terms of male hierarchy of masters and servants, there was of course a parallel female hierarchy" (Neill 2006, 168) led by Desdemona. MacDonald, thus, is not redefining the characterisation of the original Desdemona, but she reconciles two antagonistic readings of the same character: while the world of Academia has historically insisted on the passivity of Desdemona due to her attachment to the roles of daughter and wife -an idea that to the eyes of the modern reader is to some extent plausible- MacDonald restores the balance in characterisation by insisting on her independence and bravery. In this project of releasing Shakespeare's discourse from the dangers of biased and simplistic interpretation, MacDonald not only gives a new voice to Desdemona -now she embarks on a spirited defence of herself-, but she also praises the polyphonic nature of the Bard's discourse.

In this light, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* "is not so much a reaction against Shakespeare per se, as against the Canadian *idea* of Shakespeare" (Harrington 2007, 130). This quote is central in this analysis of MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation. Far from criticising Shakespeare's tragedies or defining his discourse as patriarchal, MacDonald's

goal is to recover the idea that "in the comedies negotiations between men and women begin to take place on something approaching an equal footing". Whereas in the tragedies the independence of a Desdemona is overshadowed by Othello's jealousy, and the courage of Juliet is disparaged, "in the comedies women's integrity and intelligence do not merely shine, they briefly triumph" (Sanders [1994] 2004, 163). Parody, indeed, has many faces, in the sense that "when the subject matter of the original composition is parodied, however, it may prove to be valuable indirect criticism or it may even imply a flattering tribute to the original" (Harmon and Holman 1992, 376). In a radio interview, MacDonald explained that her imitation of Shakespeare's discourse was a good way of "apprenticing [herself] to someone [she] could really trust" (quoted in Rogers 1992), while in another interview, she also argued that

> You can go into more dangerous territory, or more challenging territory for the general audience than with something that isn't comedy. My comedy challenges but invites people of diverse backgrounds and identities to experience that they might be prejudiced against at first… And in the end they find themselves identifying with people who thought were perverse or alien or deviant, and that's my crusade if I have one (quoted in Devorak 1994, 130).

MacDonald partakes of this double function of parody in the sense that she praises Shakespeare's discourse in her deliberate imitation of his use of the blank verse and iambic pentameter, in her appropriation of female characters and symbols (such as the Chorus, the ghost, and the fool), and finally in the complex network of intertextual relations upon which the play is written.

Beyond the biased assumption that Shakespeare's comedies were a more suitable ground for the female voice, while his tragedies praised the masculinity of their tragic heroes (an idea that MacDonald's play subverts by presenting a strong female character such as Desdemona, among others), MacDonald's audacious rewriting embraces an idea that readers of Shakespeare are well acquainted with: Shakespeare's tragic scenes often hide comic assumptions, while his comedies are normally tarnished with tragic motifs. Stephen Orgel also emphasises the strong connection between both genres during Elizabethan times: "[c]omedy had its place as an adjunct to tragedy, necessary but nevertheless dependent […] Tragedy is what makes comedy possible -or, putting it another way, comedy is the end of tragedy- and the Renaissance liked to emphasise this aspect of tragedy by concluding its tragedies with jigs" (1979, 120). Probably, Shakespeare's audience would have "thought of

genres not as sets of rules but as sets of expectations and possibilities" in the sense that "[c]omedy and tragedy were not forms" but "shared assumptions" (1979, 123). Constance is well aware of the almost imperceptible line between comedy and tragedy in the case of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, when she asks: ""Is this tragedy?!" Or is it comedy gone awry, when a host of comic devices is pressed into the blood-soaked service of tragic ends?" (13). She believes that both tragedies were brought about by "flimsy mistakes" such as "a lost hanky, a delayed wedding announcement", two mistakes "too easily corrected by a Wise Fool" (14). Stemming from Constance's own understanding of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, she starts translating the Gustav manuscript, which "when finally decoded, will prove the prior existence of two comedies by an unknown author; comedies that Shakespeare plundered and made over into ersatz tragedies"" (15).

Constance's PhD is not totally divorced from reality: there is a whole body of criticisms that has already analysed *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* in the light of comic conventions (just to make it clear, not as comedies), such as Ann Thompson's *Shakespeare's Chaucer. A Study in Literary Origins*, or Susan Snyder's "The Comic Matrix of Shakespeare's Tragedies: *Romeo and Juliet, Hamlet, Othello,* and *King Lear*". In fact, these aforementioned researches demonstrate how Shakespeare's discourse is much more fluid, since his plays do not exclusively operate within the realm of comedy, tragedy, or history, but that they merge different conventions. This idea finds its roots when John Heminges and Henry Condell -the editors of the First Folio of 1623- decided on the classification of Shakespeare's thirty-six plays, they divided them into three categories: histories, comedies, and tragedies. In this task, "they were making use of traditional terms that had hardly ever been seriously questioned and are still in use today, even though an exact definition or a clear distinction between them may not be possible in each particular case" (Mehl 1984, i). It can be inferred that Shakespeare's genres were not static, but dynamic, and the negotiating between them result in midpoints that play with generic expectations and categories, or in Northrop Frye's terminology, the *Augenblick*, the "crucial moment from which the road to what might have been and the road to what will be can be simultaneously seen" (1957, 213). Strategically, Constance's first appearance in the world of Cyprus and Verona coincides with this *Augenblick* from *Othello* -the handkerchief scene- and from *Romeo and Juliet* -when Tybalt slays Mercutio. Constance restores the balance so as to redirect Shakespeare's tragedies to the path of comedy. Shakespeare's tragedies reveal a complex and even

contradictory nature. Particularly, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* enhance a heterogeneous design that successfully combines both comic and tragic conventions. These tragedies may well be accounted as examples to justify Kenneth Muir's famous quote that "there is no such thing as Shakespearean Tragedy: there are only Shakespearian tragedies" (1972, 12). This telescopic nature that best defines both tragedies is to be attributed "to the undogmatic delight in experiment that is so characteristic of many Elizabethan dramatists who, unworried by any fixed poetic precepts or narrowing conventions, produced a multiplicity of forms that resist any systematization" (Mehl 1984, 2), an idea that MacDonald recovers in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, which will be reconsidered in the following chapter.

Once proved and argued that MacDonald revisits Shakespeare's Desdemona and Juliet, it is interesting to question whether MacDonald, who is constantly playing with the idea of sources and inspiration in her play, might not be revisiting Shakespeare's own sources. As explained before, MacDonald is not rewriting *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* as comedies; instead, she is recovering the comic aspects of these tragedies, knowing the comic matrix of both *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* has already been analysed and demonstrated by some critical studies, though it is worth mentioning that these works are generally considered no more than a couple of far-fetched ideas. This research was originally directed towards analysing MacDonald's characters as Shakespearean characters. At this point, an important issue was raised: if MacDonald bases her characters on stock-characters (she does) through the Shakespeare filter, is it possible that instead of going directly to Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, she had also considered the sources that Shakespeare used himself to create these tragedies? This task forced a reconsideration of the sources used by Shakespeare before *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* were conceived in order to analyse the differences or similarities that could be taken to justify the aforementioned thesis. Embarking on this topic - with the added difficulty of the disputed debate concerning Shakespeare's sources- would take more sheets of paper than expected, although it has raised a good deal of original and worth exploring ideas. It is important, however, to very briefly frame *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* within this source debate in order to understand the nature of the questions that this paper wants to present for a future research. Before considering these following ideas, it is important to remember that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are not strictly framed within the realm of tragedy.

For this purpose, Chaucer must be taken into consideration, since as Alfred David argues, "Shakespeare learned more about comedy from Chaucer than from any other author" (1979, 99). It is quite difficult to give conclusive evidence for this, but this affirmation is grounded on the fact that "the boldest and most provocative juxtaposition of comic and tragic modes before Shakespeare is undoubtedly to be found in Chaucer's *Troilus and* Criseyde" (Mehl 1986, 11). More significantly, "[i]f Shakespeare needed any demonstration that a tragic history […] could accommodate a great variety of comic scenes […] as an integral part of the tragic design, he would find it in Chaucer's great poem" (Mehl 1986, 111). Although it is difficult to prove, evidently, whether Shakespeare missed Chaucer's taste for subtle irony and purposely arranged ambiguities, or whether he understood the poem as the epitome of romantic love. Furthermore, the word "tragedy" appears for the first time in "English language in Chaucer's translation of Boethius's *Consolatio Philosophae*" (Mehl 1984, 15), although Chaucer's notion of tragedy is not necessarily related to theatre or drama for it is tied to plot. But Chaucer's influence on Shakespeare grows in importance if *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are considered. A short account on the historiography surrounding both plays should be provided. The acknowledged critical source of *Romeo and Juliet* is Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Histoyre of Romeus and Juliet* (1562). Although in the case of *Othello* the source analysis is much more disputed, the chief source is Giraldy Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1564-5), a collection of Italian novellas. Before deepening into it, the Italian novella should be considered just not to lose the track of the present argument. This genre emerged early in the 14th century in Italian Renaissance literature, their best representative being Giovanni Boccaccio and his *Decameron* (1353). This influential masterpiece is constructed from 100 brief novella told by 10 different people who are escaping the Black Death form Florence to Fiesole Hills. This brief summary brings us back to Chaucer and his *The Canterbury Tales,* which is framed by a pilgrimage to Canterbury in which the reader finds a very similar plot to that of *Decameron*. Some critics argue that Chaucer conceived *The Canterbury Tales* as a late 14th century homage to Boccaccio and, in doing so, Chaucer wrote in English language the earliest example of the Italian novella. As Dieter Mehl argues, Shakespeare, as the great majority of his contemporaries, took advantage of the popularity of this genre:

> The Italian collections of novellas, obviously very popular in translation, became a rich fund of story material for Elizabethan dramatists. Even the first love tragedy, *Gismond the Salerne*, acted between 1566 and 1568 at the Inner Temple, was based on a story from Boccaccio's *Decameron*, and the author of Shakespeare's chief source, Arthur Brooke (who also wrote plays for the Inner Temple) claims in the preface to

> this verse narrative *The Tragicall Histoyre of Romeus and Juliet* (1562) to have seen the story acted on stage (1984, 20).

In relation to the simplistic generic divide that overshadows Shakespeare's kaleidoscopic and complex writing, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are two tragedies that force comparison at different levels. First of all, at the level of *sources*, there are striking similarities between both tragedies since with the exception of the aforementioned plays "all his other tragedies are based on historical or legendary story material" (Mehl 1984, 57). It is strange, then, that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* are based on Italian novellas, since "the great majority of plays that make use of Italian novellas are, in fact, comedies" (20). Concerning *time*, the action in Shakespeare's tragedies elapses in a time span of weeks and months, with the clear exception of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, in which the action is compressed into a couple of days. Furthermore, in both tragedies the reader is introduced to one of the Italian city-states of the Renaissance, were "public politics and domestic intrigue often merge and the children's idealistic expectations of love clash with the parents' concept". In this case, both tragedies' beginnings could be considered comic archetypes. Moreover, the figure of the father, the *senex iratus* (angry father), who appears in both tragedies is a traditional stock-character of comedy, and "the whole situation reminds us of other Shakespearean comedies derived from Italian novellas" (Mehl 1984, 58). Given the nature of these connections, it is safe to argue that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* could be the two clearest examples in which to fully appreciate the tensions between tragic and comic conventions.

Shakespeare's tragedies should be now scrutinised under the light of a source study. It is worth mentioning, nevertheless, that there is no doubt that Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* was Brooke's key source, as J. J. Munro was the first to notice. Taking into account that Shakespeare, as his contemporaries, took advantage of the popularity of the Italian novella introduced by Chaucer, and that the father of English literature was a master in gambling with tragic and comic conventions, it is highly probable that Shakespeare would have gone to Chaucer directly before writing *Romeo and Juliet*. As Mehl argues, in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, "Shakespeare seems to have read Brooke in the light of Chaucer or that Chaucer is at least partly responsible for the way in which Shakespeare transformed Brooke's story" due to "Brooke's half-hearted imitation of Chaucer" (Mehl 1986, 112), which could have forced the Bard to take a closer look at the original. The following scheme can be of help:

1. Boccaccio's *Il Filostrato* → Chaucer's *Troilus and Criseyde* → Arthur Brooke's *The Tragicall Historye of Romeus and Juliet* → Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* (from Chaucer or/and Brooke)

On the other hand, the case of *Othello* deserves more attention. Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* (1564-5), which is a collection of Italian novellas in the tradition of Boccaccio's *Decameron*, is considered the main source. Keeping in mind the aforementioned connections between *The Canterbury Tales* and *Decameron* speculation begins. Taking into account the similarities between *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* -both being highly influenced by Italian novellas and motivated by this strong desire for generic experimentation- is it possible that Shakespeare had also used Chaucer's works, as well as Giraldy Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* as sources for his *Othello*? If so, there is a very similar use in sources than that found in the case of *Romeo and Juliet*:

1. Boccaccio's *Decameron* → Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* → Giraldi Cinthio's *Hecatommithi* ⇨ Shakespeare's *Othello*

Could the Bard have read *Hecatommithi* -which is based on *Decameron*, the most influential source of *The Canterbury Tales*- in the light of Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales*? These questions lack a solid foundation as far as there is not a single paper that mentions or introduced this idea. But there are some striking similarities and direct connections between *Othello* and *The Canterbury Tales*, a link that is made more apparent if MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is incorporated. The following examples can illustrate this idea. MacDonald's comedy, as will be argued later, can perfectly be considered a Bakhtinian carnival. Indeed, Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* can be read in terms of the Bakhtinian carnival, since it is an estate satire in which the different characters invent their own stories, and lie about themselves, constructing mistaken subjectivities, which is accepted precisely because they are in the context of carnival. This connection, however, is not useful when strong links between Chaucer and Shakespeare are to be provided. On the contrary, I believe that MacDonald's Othello, which is a rewriting of Shakespeare's most comic façade of Othello- shares many similarities with Chaucer's Knight. Actually, these similarities between Chaucer's Knight and MacDonald's Othello lead to many other timely questions: What if MacDonald is recovering Chaucer, instead of Shakespeare, as the chief comic source

for *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*? Is MacDonald rereading Chaucer through the lens of Shakespeare? The influence of Chaucer on *Romeo and Juliet* is more or less acknowledged. But, would the thesis that *Othello* is influenced by Chaucer's *The Canterbury Tales* rise in importance if the connections between MacDonald and Chaucer (read through Shakespeare's lens in *Othello*) were critically and analytically firmly grounded?[8]

But the present task is neither to scrutinise *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* as comedies, nor to analyse the evolution of Shakespeare's characters in the light of the official and unofficial sources he used to create these aforementioned plays, but to demonstrate how MacDonald's play partakes of this tradition of understanding Shakespeare's characters more as comic than as tragic archetypes. In this sense, it could be argued that MacDonald is not inventing the comedic counterparts of the tragedies of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but she brings to the extreme of satire the comic aspects of Shakespeare's plays, which is a wink to MacDonald's reconciliatory discourse with the Bard, at least concerning their shared strategic design when creating characters, which are conceived from different intertextual relations.

In order to demonstrate this thesis, I would like to analyse how MacDonald's Desdemona and Juliet embody the stock-characters of the *miles gloriosus* and *adolescent amator* respectively, so as to show the web of intertextual connections upon which MacDonald's Desdemona and Juliet are created. Furthermore, the gender reversal between Othello and Desdemona, and Romeo and Juliet will also be discussed in order to demonstrate how MacDonald uses the deconstruction of gender roles as the most important tool from which to alter tragic conventions. At a structural level, this first chapter will put down the roots for the second chapter in which the revisited balcony scene of *Romeo and Juliet* and the pillow scene from *Othello* will be considered in order to demonstrate how MacDonald advocates for the neutral gender approach, which reinforces the dissolution of both gender and generic conventions. In fact, both chapters can be read as two different but closely interrelated parts of the same section.

All this said, it is significant to remember that Aristotle's disciple Theophrastus in his *The Characters* originally conceived the study of the character, where he developed thirty character types that would have a major influence in the conception of theatrical comic types. *The Characters* gained Roman input through Plautus, who developed eight modes of characters inspired by the previous work of Atellan Farce, and both the Greek Old and New

[8] Though this is a very significant finding, expanding this exceeds the scope of this paper.

Comedy. Among them, the *miles gloriosus* and the *adolescent amator* take on immediate importance so far as they bear a strong resemblance to Othello and Romeo in Shakespeare's plays. MacDonald's play, "with its politics of substitution and pattern of reversal" (Devorak 1994, 131), recreates these aforementioned types in Juliet and Desdemona respectively. Teague argues that if one

> desired to restore the narrative of *Othello* to a genre of comedy, it would not be enough to inject an alien character into the *Augenblick* as was the case in *Romeo and Juliet*; one would have to restore Othello to the comic type of the *miles gloriosus* (1986, 59).

This is precisely what MacDonald achieves in the play. A part from injecting the wise fool -Constance- into the handkerchief scene of *Othello*, through a strategy of bathos or of deflation, Othello abandons his traditional role as tragic hero to play that of the *miles gloriosus*, which is a stock-character typical in comic literature best defined as a bragging and boastful soldier. When Constance arrives in Cyprus, the Moor is far from being the tragic hero par excellence:

OTHELLO [Y]ou must learn the story of my life:
of moving accidents by flood and field,
of hairbreadth scapes I' th' imminent deadly breach,
of being taken by the insolent foe –
CONSTANCE Oh yes, I know
IAGO [*Aside*] So know we all the wag and swagger of this tale.
OTHELLO In Egypt, kicked I sand into the eyes
Of infidels who thought I made a truce
When I did give to them a pyramid
On wheels they pulled into the garrison.
But I packed it full with Christian men,
Who slit the savage throat of every Turk.
CONSTANCE That sounds like Troy.
IAGO [*Aside*] Not Troy, but false (27).

In this highly significant example, it can be seen how Othello is portrayed as a boastful Moor, who shows excessive pride and satisfaction of his achievements. His style is highly indecorous and the rhetorical flourishes he uses when explaining his deeds offer another possibility from which to dismantle his status as tragic hero. This exaggeration and subversion in the character of Othello is also used as a method of conversion from tragic hero to the comic *miles gloriosus*, who is interrupted and mocked by both Iago and Constance. The reader is utterly unable to take Othello seriously, for as throughout the play his far from

heroic personality gives carte blanche to Iago, Constance and Desdemona, who can take centre of action at his expense. On her part, the reader notices how comedy is fostered not only because of this strategy of bathos, but also through the neutral gender approach concerning stock-characters. Though the *miles gloriosus* has traditionally been attached to male characters, the Desdemona the reader encounters in MacDonald's play is far from being a passive victim. Desdemona's first performance in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* must be considered at this point.

OTHELLO *Here comes the lady. Let her witness it.*

DESDEMONA O valiant general and most bloody lord!
OTHELLO *O my fair warrior!*
DESDEMONA *My dear Othello!*
OTHELLO My better self!
DESDEMONA *That I love my lord to live with him,*
my downright violence and storm of fortunes
may trumpet to the world. My sole regret –
that heaven had not made me such a man;
but next in honour is to be his wife.
And I love my honour more than life! Who's this? (27).

In this passage, MacDonald appropriates Desdemona's original lines in Act I, s. iii. Through the mixing of intertext and MacDonald's own language, Desdemona is repositioned as a force of power within the play, literally becoming Othello's "better self". This illustrates how the dialogic, as in this case, embraces different meanings within utterances and, as a result, projects different images or subjectivities of the same character. This understanding of both Othello and Desdemona as the same force within the play not only destabilises and contravene gender norms, but it goes one step further in parodying patriarchal structures, such as violence and the image of the soldier as the epitome of masculinity, which has traditionally been embodied in the figure of the Moor in Shakespeare's plays. While in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, Othello -in Constance words- "is not a Moor" (27), Desdemona not only acquires many of his most famous quotes, but she also embraces the figure of the soldier, for as she enjoys a taste for blood. This following example illustrates this point:

DESDEMONA Nothing if not war-like!
I'd join these ranks of spiked and fighting shes:
to camp upon the deserts vast and sing
our songs of conquest, and a dirige or two
for sisters slain on honour's gory fields (30).

This takes place when Desdemona decides to help Constance to sort out her situation at Queens. Desdemona's portrayal of Constance problem as a war against Academe, where "*cannibals that each other eat, and men whose heads do grow beneath their shoulders?*" (37), as well as the explicit violence in Desdemona's behaviour, could be considered another instance from which to claim a female text as "narratively disruptive and often multi-centred" (Dvorak 1994, 132), for as through strategies of subversion, dialogism, and collectivity MacDonald recuperates another reading of Shakespeare's Desdemona, which is not bounded by the discourse of Academia.

A similar conclusion can be reached if Romeo and Juliet are taken into consideration. Very much as Othello, Romeo is deflated from tragic hero to the comic stock-character of the *adolescent amator* which could be defined as the young man in love who rebels against his father's authority. In fact, rather than being a strategy of deflation, it could be argued that MacDonald is bringing to the extreme of satire this stock-character that Shakespeare used himself in *Romeo and Juliet*, for as in the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet*, both protagonists could be considered this traditional comic stock-character. MacDonald's Romeo, then, rather than being the embodiment of romantic and Petrarchan love, is portrayed as a prototypical contemporary youngster interested in fighting and going out with friends. For instance, after their wedding night, which is tinted with comicality precisely because they are too young to be married, Romeo explains:

> ROMEO [*On with the doublet*] Yes dear. There's some fun
> Going forward at The Gondolier: the fellows and I
> Are getting up a cock-fight, followed by a bear-bait-
> Ing, then hie us to a public hanging in the piazza,
> There to take out noon-day meal (54).

MacDonald's Juliet is far from the naïve thirteen-year old girl who does not know much about love and marriage; instead, after their first night together (which could be analysed in the light of the wedding night between Chaucer's Troilus and Criseyde), she wants to recover her status as single woman so as to experience other aspects of her sexuality further in the play. She explains:

> JULIET O Hymen, god of marriage, pray undo
> Thy holy work: Make me a maid again!
> To plunge once more in love's first firey pit,
> to hover there 'twixt longing and content,
> condemned to everlasting Limbo, O!
> Penance me with new love's burning tongs;

> Spit and sear me slow o'er heaven's flames;
> Grant me an eternity to play with fire! (57).

Juliet's soliloquy, with its sexual allusions, exaggerated feeling, and indecorous language, also illustrates this strategy of exaggeration that MacDonald uses to alter tragic conventions. On the other hand, Juliet becomes Romeo's other face, for as she is also representative of the *adolescent amator*. These two examples have shown how

> [o]n the broadest scale, *Goodnight Desdemona* is a multiple parody and reworking of Shakespeare's genres, a comical Shakespearean romance. And while Shakespearean tragedy explodes with the tricks of Shakespearean comedy, Shakespeare explodes with the tricks of our own popular culture (Fortier 1989, 49).

3. Revisiting Elizabethan Conventions

One of the principal topics of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is the deconstruction and final dissolution of gender roles. Through the recontextualisation of Shakespeare's characters in the protagonist's unconscious and the insertion of Constance into the world of Cyprus and Verona, both their gender and sexuality are subverted by presenting an Othello in skirts, a warrior Desdemona, a Sappho-like Juliet, and a bisexual Romeo. The overall critical assessment of the play, nonetheless, has been exclusively undertaken through the lens of the politics of sexuality, putting special emphasis on the lesbian, homosexual, and bisexual relationships within the play. This is not surprising at all, since MacDonald's play provides a suitable platform from which to transmit strong messages of sexual equality by reclaiming Shakespeare's characters as examples for the lesbian and gay communities too. So, far from repeating or supplementing previous interpretations which have dealt with the subverted sexuality of many of the play's characters and its impact regarding the representation of strong fe/male characters in modern times, -such as Laurin R. Porter's "Shakespeare's 'Sisters': Desdemona, Juliet, and Constance Ledbelly in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*", or Shelley Scott's "Desdemona, Juliet and Constance Meet the Third Wave"- the present paper will tackle the implications of cross-dressing in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* from another perspective.

Acknowledging the importance of the sexual approach, this paper will study this interchange of costumes as a recovering of Elizabethan theatrical conventions, in which male actors played indistinctively the role of both male and female characters, a topic that until now has gone unrecognised by MacDonald scholarship, but which is crucial in the understanding of MacDonald's reconciliatory discourse. This analysis will be entwined with the "gender trouble" (in resonance with Judith Butler's theory), which is a sound argument through which to expose the superficial and farcical nature of the gender construct based on the binary opposition between male and female. On the other hand, this neutral approach to gender ultimately reinforces the dissolution of generic boundaries between tragedy and comedy when mistakenly coupled with the gender approach (comedies considered the "feminine genre", while tragedies as the "masculine"). Through this strategy of dissociation between genre and gender, dramatic comedy appears as a borderless world in which strategies of dialogism, inclusion, and reconciliation are more willing to succeed. One of the reasons that serves to justify this idea brings us back to the subversive use of humour and irony as

tools of social criticism: they create a space where audiences or readers are more likely to accept alterations in the "normal" order of things when different realities or subjectivities are brought into legitimacy. At the same time, these comedic strategies sow the seeds of change in audiences and readers so as to reconsider and as such integrate socially bound assumptions.

In the previous section, this paper has scrutinised how MacDonald's Juliet and Desdemona are products of pure intertextualities, since they are constructed from stock characters that Shakespeare adapted himself for his tragedies. They are placed at the centre of action by firstly acquiring many of the most defining traits of Othello and Romeo, secondly, by staring in the most popular dramatic scenes originally designed for their male counterparts and, lastly, by poking fun at two of the most highly regarded Shakespearean scenes -the pillow scene and the balcony scene- as will be considered in the last section of this chapter. In MacDonald's play, through the interchange of costumes between Romeo and Juliet and Othello and Desdemona, among other characters, another important evidence from which to visually claim the neutral gender approach is provided. It should be clarified that this analysis is going to be carried out on two different but interrelated levels. In the first part of this chapter, the Elizabethan theatrical tradition of having an all-male cast will be firstly compared to the group of actors and actresses assembled for the first production of the play. In doing so, this link will demonstrate how the hybridity of this Shakespearean theatrical convention is recuperated and celebrated by the play's first production. This thesis will be reinforced if the latest theatrical adaptation of MacDonald's play is taken into consideration. On the other hand, the gender of the play's characters (which at first sight is an aspect not necessarily related to the cast) will be then studied in the light of different instances of cross-dress within the play. In order to establish a strong link between the two said approaches, as well as to gain a better insight into the importance of comic performativity, it is significant to recall that at Shakespeare's time plays were performed employing an all-male cast, until King Charles II's decree in 1660 declared that "all the women's parts to be acted in either of the said two companies may be performed by women" (quoted in Senelick 2000, 210), with Desdemona being the first Shakespearean heroine acted out by a woman on a pubic stage. The connection between the metafictional (the cast) and the fictional (deconstruction of gender roles within the play) is already advanced by Hengen, when in her analysis of different contemporary comedies she argues that while such "cross-dressing was a convention of the Renaissance

theatre, in a post-modern world it acknowledges gender as performance" (1998, xiii), an idea best theorised by Judith Butler in her outstanding study *Gender Trouble*.

Bakhtin's theory of the European medieval and early Renaissance carnivalesque, as developed in *Rabelais and His World*, acquires again crucial importance here: during carnival "all were considered equal" and "[p]eople were, so to speak, reborn for new, purely human relations" (1984, 10) through "a kind of laughter that defeats fear" (1984, 47). Carnival, then, served "to permit the combination of a variety of different elements and their rapprochement, to liberate from the prevailing point of view of the world" and "to enter a completely new order of things" (1984, 34). Through the "rapprochement" and subsequent "combination" of different past and present forms of theatricality, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* partakes of this suspension of both gender (including both the metafictional and fictional levels of this last aspect), and generic expectations (in the shared optimism that comedy is tragedy's other face). As Bakhtin continues, ideology and form are strongly connected in a manner that "ideology is not something separable from the form, and the form is not something separable from our emotional engagement with it" (1984, 60). Bakhtin's comic carnivalesque was developed to disrupt different hierarchical relations of power. This ideology can be firstly extended to gender dynamics (encompassing again both metafictional and fictional levels) which is undoubtedly another product of power relations of a different nature, as opposed to gender "normatives" based on binary oppositions between male and female.

Regarding drama, Bakhtin's carnival could also be compared to comedy (a kind of carnival on stage), as the most effective context in which to dismantle the generic hierarchy since, as previously seen, Shakespeare's tragedies were promoted as the masculine and most privileged genre par excellence. Bakhtin's carnival -which contextually works pretty much as this comedic play- provides a suitable ground in which to alter and subvert gender and generic conventions without discriminating sceptical and/or marginalised identities, since power relations of different but closely related nature are geared towards change through humour and irony. In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, hence, the strong relationship between message/ideology (gender and genre) and form can be best appreciated through the altering of costumes (as in Bakhtin's carnival), being the most effective tool to transform and integrate audiences, as well as to challenge the status quo.

In general, theatre stages the performativity of human life, as Shakespeare himself wrote in *As You Like It*, "[a]ll the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players" (Shakespeare 2007, 496). In particular, female writers of comedy's main goal is to rewrite history, and, as a result,

> Seeing it from the perspective of those traditionally considered irrelevant to its formation: women, non-whites, and artists in unofficial genres, each of whom is given voice here. What results is a dialogue between present and past, marginal and dominant, female and male, a dialogue that manages to offer renewed views of each of those pairs of terms in that curiously friendly dynamic that seems to belong the comic alone (Hengen 1998, xv).

It is in this context that the cast of the first production must be considered: Derek Boyes played out Othello, Tybalt, Professor Claude Night, and Juliet's Nurse. Beverley Cooper was in charge of representing Juliet, Student and a Soldier of Cyprus. Diana Fajrajsl played the role of Desdemona, Ramona, Mercutio, and the servant. This division of characters has its logic in the sense that the same actor or actress -emphasising the character's nature rather than their different subjectivities- stages the same archetype or stock-character type. But this distribution of characters brings a note of discord when one realises that the gender of characters do not necessarily correspond to that of the actors and actresses who represent them. This thesis is quite evident, since the job of actors and actresses is to mask their identities through performance: they epitomise the *performativity* of human characterisation. But taking into account the play's politics of reversal, it is fair to argue that this non-correspondence was purposely arranged to offer another level of meta that crosses fictional boundaries and breaks the fourth wall while embracing all aspects of theatrical performance. The political message is clear: if during Elizabethan times, actors (precisely because of their gender) could successfully perform a wide variety of different subjectivities and roles -as Hengen points "woman, non-whites, and artists in unofficial genres", among others (note that these said collectives that were not allowed to perform were normally women or people from racial and ethnic minorities)- this new cast visually demonstrates how reconsidered but at the same time highly influential Shakespearean characters can also be fairly represented by actors and actresses indistinctively, disregarding of their gender, race, etc. In front of this multivocal narrative/theatre/performance, the audience is profoundly transformed if this dialogue or reconciliation between past and present conventions is significantly established in the realm of comedy; the audience is well aware that in the realm of carnival -best defined by this suspension of the natural order of things- it is highly probable that their previous assumptions

and future expectations are going to be questioned, turned upside down, and finally changed. It is reasonable to claim that *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* "is not a mere parody, but an exuberant tribute to the Bard and his philosophy of theatre" (Kolinská 2008, 209). As Marta Dvorak explains:

> This unpretentious play, which reveals a profound understanding of theatricality as it was practiced from the Elizabethan straight to the Romantic period, is ultimately liberating. By granting us a permission to play freely with our past, our cultural heritage (too often ossified) and by holding out a promise of infinite combinational possibilities, it is a celebration of spectacle itself (1994, 133).

It should be noted that what Bakhtin refers to as a "combination of a variety of different elements" and Dvorak defines as "infinite combinational possibilities" directly connects to the cocktail of past and present theatrical conventions that is typical of the first production. This "curiously friendly dynamics" -in Shannon Hengen's words- results in a neutral approach not so much to the gender of the cast and that of the revisited Shakespearean characters (as will be later analysed), but more significantly to the contemporary interpretation and reception of Shakespeare's discourse. If the Bard has been universally acknowledged as an instrument for colonial dominance through which to transmit the British colonial values, MacDonald claims the importance of Shakespeare's discourse by liberating it from the negative connotations that throughout history have been given to Shakespeare's characters, symbols, and motifs by different grandnarratives -such as colonialism, imperialism, and why not, feminism. MacDonald challenges the manipulative monopoly that surrounds Shakespeare's plays by creating a polyphonic text that includes different perspectives, an endeavour that reaches its highest point by showing how nobody's property is the property of all. After all, the adaptations, rewritings and recontextualisation of Shakespeare's plays are the best evidences that show the timeless and universal nature of Shakespeare's masterpieces, which display a profound understanding of human emotion that does not depend on race, culture, gender or language. Emma Smith, Professor of Shakespeare Studies at the University of Oxford, is currently conducting her research on the dangers of interpreting and labelling Shakespeare's discourse, an idea which is clearly connected to the present paper. In a personal talk with Smith, she concluded that as the historical interpretation of Shakespeare's texts has demonstrated, Shakespeare's works should be considered "objects rather than texts" in the sense that the world of Academia has dangerously changed Shakespeare's discourse. Smith's present research talks to "the dangers of materialising

Shakespeare as a fetish, an object, or a relic", and the perils "of conceptualising a living body". In the light of understanding Shakespeare's discourse as a fabricated construction, a simulacra that precedes the real thing, or, as she accurately defines as "a cultural object" rather than an interpreted text, she frames her research on "what different people has wanted to do with [Shakespeare's discourse] and with which purposes", this "people" being a clear reference to different discourses or grand narratives that have appropriated Shakespeare from different perspectives and with different goals, such as Shakespeare in Canada, for instance. As Smith explained, "books change us, which is something intrinsically to all of us. But we should be interested in how we, as readers and critics, change books", since, as the continuum of critical history shows, the "interpretation of Shakespeare is not clear transfer of knowledge and culture". Smith's words, very much as MacDonald's play, reinforce the present paper's thesis when talking about the quintessentially English writer she argues that "we invented Shakespeare. If interpretation can do Shakespeare, it can do anything" (Emma Smith, pers. comm.), ultimately echoing Jorge Luis Borges' quote "when writers die, they become books" (quoted in Monegal and Reid 1981, 233).

These aforementioned ideas concerning the dissolution of the gender divide are reinforced when the latest adaptation of MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is brought into the scene. As mentioned before, in Shakespeare's time, actors acted both the male and female characters, whose gender and sexuality were represented and theatricalised by specific costumes, make up, etc. MacDonald's play stands as the modern progression of the aforementioned politics of dress, since actors and actresses play the role of both male and female characters indistinctively without altering neither the gender of the characters nor the most basic essence of the scenes revisited. MacDonald not only inserts the female actress, but she also makes her the centre of attention by having a hermaphrodite protagonist. The last and most significant step to show the dynamics of representation as something much more fluid (as it was in Shakespeare's time) was to adapt *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* as a play that was exclusively acted out by actresses, in order to demonstrate how the purposeful omission of actors would not imply a change of Shakespeare's original message and key scenes. In a 90-degree-turn "on Shakespeare's boys-only casting policy, director Kate Newby [director of the latest version] assembled an all-female cast, adding an extra layer to the play's feminist revision of the Bard" (Hemminger 2016). Co-produced with The Shakespeare's Company, and Hit & Myth Productions,

Handsome Alice Theatre (formerly Urban Curvz), this new adaptation premiered 12th May 2016, being, in Newby's words, "the first time this approach has ever been taken with MacDonald's play" (quoted in Hobson 2016). Handsome Alice's massive popularity has grown in its desire "to unleash the female voice by supporting female artists and writers, but also to unleash the female voice in all of us" (quoted in Hobson 2016), a mandate that resonates with Nightwood's Theatre's feminist agenda.

Newby's adaptation works beyond the revision of the Bard: while *Othello* is set during the Vietnam War, Romeo and Juliet's love story is staged in the context of the Free Love Movement of the 1970s. In an interview the current author was granted on the 12th of July, 2016, Kate Newby admitted that this recontextualisation -far from deconstructing Shakespeare's characters- was designed "to enhance the sexual teenage drive found in the world of MacDonald's version" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.). But the selection of these scenarios is of greatest importance if patriarchal structures are taken into account, since the Free Love Movement is entwined with feminism in their shared desire to emancipate both state and church interference from sexual matters, and wars have always been regarded as products of normative masculinity, soldiers being the epitome of the masculine "ideal". The selection of these stages, then, rather than contributing to the subversion of Shakespeare's characters, is "a step further towards heightening the patriarchal themes found in MacDonald's play" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.).

Newby's unique production could be considered a successful attempt to subvert the male gaze. On the political level, Newby is "driven by the desire to provide female theatre makers with the same opportunities as their male counterparts", thus, visually claiming gender equality on the Canadian stage. She conclusively demonstrates how this reversal of gender roles on stage is a conceptual -and equally convincing- alternative, rather than a critique or a tribute to Elizabethan conventions of cross-dressing. Furthermore, having an all-female cast has a greater impact if the audience is taken into account, since the play "awakened the audiences' awareness of MacDonald's deconstruction of normatives in relation to the masculine and feminine 'ideal' and the politics of gender" by heightening "the absurdity of the gender dynamics" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.), showing once more how "[d]ramatic cross-dressing, once necessary for convention, has become a trope for gender fluidity" (Hengen 1998, xiv). But, rather than merely asserting the futility of gender divisions, this recent adaptation goes a step further in reconsidering Desdemona, Juliet, and Constance -

all female subjects that have been abused, misinterpreted and subsequently misunderstood by the world of Academia, and (it might be added) 20th century Canadian Theatre (led by the Stratford Shakespearean Festival). Through the female-lens Newby "took […] another level of meta" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.) which indeed "made MacDonald's concept more humorous" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.). By bringing MacDonald's comedy to the extreme of satire, Newby echoes Linda Hutcheon's statement when the latter argues that "parodic strategies are often used by feminist artists to point to the history and historical power of cultural representations, while ironically contextualizing both in such a way as to deconstruct them" (1988, 102). This quote brings us back to the concerns of the Third-wave, in which feminist activity actively fights to tear down female stereotypes in the arena of media and literature that have profoundly influenced and shaped women's imaginary. As both MacDonald and Newby demonstrate, tragic heroines such as Desdemona, Juliet or Constance can become their true selves by dialoguing with the male gaze that has interpreted and generated meaning about them, coming to terms with these phallocentric perspectives, and finally including their own understanding to these same images, a process which is symbolised in Constance's journey interacting with actresses who represent reconsidered Shakespearean fe/male characters.

As previously explained, it may seem quite obvious that having actors or actresses playing the role of female or male characters respectively does not necessarily imply the alteration of the characters' gender. But when an all-female cast is assembled in order to represent Othello and Romeo -two of most notorious masculine archetypes that have built an imaginary in the understanding of Shakespeare's plays- the critical community can sing a different tune. Stemming from this debate, Kate Newby (as MacDonald and Shakespeare) partakes of this tradition which integrates this "gender neutral approach to telling a humanistic narrative" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.), by prioritising the causes for comedy or tragedy above generic implications of theatrical conventions. In fact, Newby's adaptation "Othello was very masculine and in some ways more male and sexually virile than some of the male interpretations [she] [has] seen" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.). Similarly, "the portrayal of Romeo worked beautifully due to the small physical frame and youthful energy of the author" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.). Julie Orton, who does not hide her blonde hair while acting the villain, plays Iago.

Figure 1. From left to right Allison Lynch as Desdemona and Julie Orton as Iago in Kate Newby's adaptation of Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, presented by The Shakespeare Company & Handsome Alice Theatre and Hit & Myth Productions. Photo Credit: Benjamin Laird Arts and Photography.

As Newby argues, "[t]he only way [male and] female characters are empowered is if they win what they've set out to achieve and that works in both comedy and tragedy" (Kate Newby, pers. comm.), an argument which ultimately disrupts the flawed assumptions that Shakespeare's comedies were more "feminine", while his tragedies were more "masculine". Generically, this also refutes the argument that comedies represent a safer ground for the female voice, while showing how tragic heroines can subvert generic conventions while playfully reversing dramatic expectations. An accurate whole, then, can only be achieved through reconciliation, as this new adaptation experimentally shows. It does not only bring comedy to the extreme, but by employing an all-female cast this production closes the circle of both gender and genre representation. As the director explains:

> In traditional productions of *GD(GMJ)*, the audience tends to passively observe male/female dynamics and accepts them as norm, in this production the audience was very vocal in its acknowledgement of the gender dynamics found in the narrative. Numerous audience members commented that the Handsome Alice productions had always been done with an all-female cast and couldn't imagine seeing it with a mixed-gendered cast. Others, who had experienced previous productions felt this was the first time the play made sense to them (Kate Newby, pers. comm.).

Newby's adaptation reinforces the collective feminist approach which is becoming a crucial issue to contemporary feminist Canadian theatre, showing how "artists have set up an

interdependent networking in which a woman who takes part in another's collective creation or scripted play eventually produces her own play". This collaborative work emphasises the multi-centred or multi-vocal nature of this kind of texts (embracing both male and female perspectives), which "seek a way of speaking and writing which can express change, variation and inconsistencies" (Lebowitz 1991, 21). This cooperative endeavour includes writers, theatre directors, actors and actresses, and the ultimate authority, the audience. In offering a reconstruction of the playboy's theatrical performance and the dynamics of audience, Newby modifies those modes of performativity in order to fit our own understanding. Newby is well aware of the power of theatre to transform audiences. MacDonald uses the intertext (*Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*) to create an attractive piece of fiction that not only includes the voices from the margins but that also accommodates the audience's expectations to issues they (maybe) do not identify with (gender deconstruction, lesbian, homosexual or bisexual relations, among others). Through humour and irony, MacDonald achieves this reconciliation between sceptical and/or marginalised members of the audience (including readers). In her own words, humour is a "way of inviting the reader in […] And once you've established that complicity […] then you can do all kinds of weird things. And then you can be outrageous" (quoted in Lockhart 2005, xiv). MacDonald is also motivated by this desire to bring the audience into the meaning-making process so as to "take possession of their cultural (re)production, including the construction of gender" (Dvorak 1994, 128). And it is at this point where an analysis of the gender travesty that best defines the play should be carried.

The work of feminist theorists such as Judith Butler invites us to look beyond what appears to be the "normal" or "natural" in gender conventions to a mutable construct, or in other words ideology, based on the *performativity* of fe/male roles. Butler's study assumes that "the gendered body is performative" and that it "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality" ([1990] 2007, 136). The protagonist of MacDonald's play epitomises this gender *performativity* by behaving as Constance, or Constantine in different instances of the play, best dramatised through the altering of costumes, an idea which brings us back to *the female page*, a type of character that was pretty successful in Shakespeare's times and which attracted English Renaissance writers and dramatists such as Shakespeare, and whose "cross-gender disguise allowed women to violate patriarchal norms of female behaviour" (Shapiro [1996] 2002, 7-8). For instance, when Constance lands in Verona and interrupts the pivotal scene that prompts the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* she is

"now wearing just her longjohns, boots and tweed jacket" (50), a hilarious cross-dressing that contributes to an intricate web of lesbian and homosexual relationships between Romeo, Juliet, and Constance. When Romeo asks her, "[s]peak, boy… speak boy", to what Constance, after "a moment of decision […] clears he throat to a more masculine pitch" answers: "[a] stranger here, my name is Constan-tine" (50). From her arrival in Verona, Constance personifies the figure of the fool in all its splendour, being the one who -on purpose- fosters this travesty of Shakespeare's plays. The more Constance decides to experience with hidden aspects of her sexuality (lesbian, and mistaken homosexual relationships) and personality (she is empowered as long as she masters the subversive use of humour as will be developed in the next chapter), the more surrealist this rewriting of Shakespeare's tragedies appears. The second part of the play is significantly set in a "masked wedding feast at Capulet Hall", a fictional but highly symbolical context that resembles a kind of Bakhtinian carnival, where "[e]veryone wears a half-mask" (51), another link to the deconstruction of a single unitary gendered identity. For instance, the performativity of vestimentary codes is appreciated when homosexual Romeo, believing that Constance is indeed a boy who prefers women to men, decides to wear women's clothes to attract Constance: "let a bodice be my winding sheet; I'll wear a woman's gown until I die, sith it's a piece of skirt that likes his eye". On her part, Juliet's statement "[t]hou pretty boy, I will ungreek thee yet" (a clear intertextual reference to Lady Macbeth's "unsex me here" (Shakespeare 2007, 1871)) not only challenges the stereotype of Juliet as "the essence of first love" and "of beauty that will never face, of passion that will never die" (64), but it also favours another instance of interchange of costumes. After having seen Romeo and Constantine dancing, Juliet believes that Constantine is homosexual. In order to attract "his" attention, she decides to get "into Romeo's closet and steal hose!" (65). Now, Romeo wears Juliet's clothes and vice versa, a cross-dressing that visually strengthens the dissolution of gender roles. But the fact that an actress stages Juliet dressed as a man, and an actor represents a Romeo wearing women's clothes makes this gender deconstruction even more powerful. Juliet's new attraction for Constantine requires special attention if the following scene is considered:

JULIET: [Below] *But soft! What light through yonder*
window breaks?
Is the East, and Constantine *the sun!*
CONSTANCE: Uh oh.

JULIET: He speaks.
CONSTANCE: Romeo? Is that you?
JULIET: *I know not how to tell thee who I am.*
My sex, dear boy, *is hateful to myself,*
because it is an enemy to thee;
therefore I wear tonight, this boyish hose.
CONSTANCE: Juliet? What are you doing down there? How on earth did you get into the orchard?
JULIET: *With love's light wings did I o'erperch-*
CONSTANCE: I see.
I'm sorry Juliet, it's not to be,
I'm not at all the man you think I am
JULIET: I wot well what thou art, and yet I love.
CONSTANCE: You do?
JULIET: Ay.
CONSTANCE: You mean you know my true identity?
JULIET: Indeed. Thou art a deviant of Greece.
O Constantine! O wherefore art thou bent?
CONSTANCE: Shshshsh! Good heavens, keep your voice down please.
JULIET: Deny thy preference and refuse thy sex;
Or, if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love,
and henceforth never will I be a girl.
CONSTANCE: I'm not… a deviant, for heaven's sake (67-68).

The dissolution of the gender construct is here exemplified by Constance taking up Juliet's original spatial role in *Romeo and Juliet*, and Juliet that of Romeo. Most importantly, by having MacDonald's Juliet saying quotes that in Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* belong to both Romeo and Juliet (as in the previous scene, where Juliet's quotes are directly taken from Shakespeare's Romeo), and vice versa (when Romeo tells Constance Shakespeare's Juliet's quote "*[i]t is my sex that is thine enemy. Call me but love, and I'll be new*" (61)), forces us to consider this coalition unity not so much in relation to the gender roles, but, most significantly, concerning stock-characters. As Keir Elam explains "however many the individual character (or *acteurs*) and whatever the form of their relationships, the underlying *actants* remain the same" ([1980] 2002, 114). Macbeth and Lady Macbeth could be considered the two faces of the same coin, since they behave very much as the same force, or in Étienne Souriau's terminology, *actant*, within the play. While many would argue that Lady Macbeth is representative of the dark lady stock-character, others will consider both characters as representatives of the tragic hero(ine), their only significant difference being their gender. In fact, it is precisely because of the gender construct that Macbeth is regarded

as a tragic hero, while Lady Macbeth almost personifies Evil.[9] As this analysis enfolds, one realises that the stock-character division in the realms of tragedy and comedy is highly influenced and bounded by the traditional gender divide, female characters always taking the least powerful and most negative archetypes. However, if the non-gendered biased notion of *actant* is considered, Macbeth and Lady Macbeth (this latest being the only Shakespeare's female characters that has not a name of her own, something that strengthens the defended idea) are two ramifications of the same force/*actant*. Étienne Souriau identifies six *actants* "which, he insists, are valid for drama of all periods and genres" (Elam [1980] 2002, 114) to which he gives astrological names[10].

A very similar working operates in MacDonald's play: the dissolution of gender roles goes beyond an empowerment of female characters (as seen in my analysis of MacDonald's Desdemona and Juliet in Chapter I), for as it results in the sharing between male and female characters of the same *actant*'s functions in MacDonald's play. Constance personifies both the natural and the wise fool, a stock-character that is elevated to the category of comic heroine. The stock-characters they adequately represent are all portrayed as hermaphrodite by being embodied in male and female characters (and represented by actors and actresses) indistinctively. So, far from being a mere dissolution of gender roles between Othello and Desdemona, or Romeo and Juliet, in the association of the same stock-character/*actant* to male and female characters, MacDonald expands the neutral gender approach to dramatic archetypes. That explains why, to some extent, it is more appropriate to use Souriau's six *actants* rather than stock-characters, given that he identifies functions rather than gendered stock-characters. This idea is exemplified in the previous scene when Juliet defines Constance as "*the sun*", a term originally used by Romeo in reference to Juliet in Shakespeare's play. While the moon has traditionally been a feminine symbol associated to notions of passivity and submission, this reconsideration of Constance using a classical symbol for male supremacy reinforces this dissolution of gender roles. MacDonald purposely appropriates this reference so as to exemplify how Shakespeare also created strong female characters. As argued in the first chapter, the "obvious way of adding novelty and interest to such a [love] story is to strengthen the role of the heroine […] by bringing the heroine firmly into the

[9] To add another example of the complexities and impact of gender regarding characters, Keir Elam himself categorises Lady Macbeth as "*The Moon*, or helper, whose function is to reinforce any one of the other five (by assisting the protagonist" ([1980] 2002, 115), thus, relegating Lady Macbeth to the position of "helper".
[10] For a detailed description of the six different *actants* see Étienne Souriau's *The 200,000 Dramatic Situations* (1950), or Keir Elam's *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (2002) (pp. 114-119).

action, comparing her experience with that of her lover at every stage" (Thompson 1978, 103). That effect is achieved, on the one hand, by having Shakespeare's Juliet at the higher spatial position (in the balcony) and Romeo at the lowest point in the vertical drive. On the other hand, this reinforcement is accomplished by having Romeo referring to Juliet as "*the sun!*" (Shakespeare 2007, 1546). Moreover, the Sun is one of the six *actants* developed by Souriau, which is "representative of the Good or Value sought by the [thematic force of the drama]". The Sun is "the crown, the liberty, the holy grail, etc." that can be "embodied in a particular individual […] or remain an ideal" (Elam [1980] 2002, 115). These ideas also appear in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, since the driving force of the plot is assembled in Constance and her quest for identity symbolised in the Gustav Manuscript. The Chorus identifies the manuscript as "her Philosopher's Stone" (6), and Professor Night explicitly refers to it as "the Holy Grail, or the Golden Fleece". When Professor Night argues that the "best tenured minds in the world have sought to translate it for the past three hundred years", such as "Darwin, Bingham [and] Don Quixote" (16) he is making explicit reference to masculine (and to his book) more "tenured" minds, clear examples of the Sun *actant.* At the end of the play, Constance takes on the role of the Sun by symbolically decoding the manuscript that will prove her true identity. Her mind proves to be as valuable as that of the great figures of the Academia, as does MacDonald in comparison to Shakespeare.

This destabilisation in the gender and character of Juliet and Constance deliberately fosters the gambling of the dramatic conventions of tragedy and comedy. Through the recontextualisation of the most defining scene of the tragedy of *Romeo and Juliet* into a modern comedy, as well as the subversive and humorous use of intertext, the playwright approaches the tipping point in the neutral approach to the constructs of gender and genre. On the one hand, Constance has occupied different discursive positions by challenging gender expectations, being Constance and Constantine in different scenes of the play. On the other hand, taking into account that comedy and tragedy concur in Shakespeare's play, it is arguable that the balcony scene from MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is not that different from the balcony scene of Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*; there is no fundamental difference neither in the way both lovers (disregarding of their gender and sexuality) express and experience their love, nor in the spatial and contextual arrangement of the scene (both scenes are set in a balcony in Verona, and are played by two characters). Space, moreover, is also performative so as "the performance itself begins with the

information-rich registering of stage space" and "[e]ven with the unfolding of the time-bound theatrical discourse, those constraints remain the primary influences on perception and reception" (Elam [1980] 2002, 50), and by extension of change to the status quo. Not even linguistically they change. Obviously, this strategy takes effect because members of the audience or readers know MacDonald's source and what it represents in their imaginary, space being the first and to some extent more significant force that builds the nature of our imaginary.

Similarly, the pillow scene -one of the most tragic and violent Shakespearean scenes- that MacDonald rewrites from *Othello* could be a very appropriate example to fight male violence against women in contemporary society. When in Act III, scene vii, Constance and Juliet are on Juliet's bed, the following takes place:

They chuckle and lie back again as JULIET *begins to re-arrange the pillows on the bed. Suddenly she screams*-]

JULIET Ah-h-h-h-h-h-h-h-!!!

[- *and leaps back to reveal* DESDEMONA, *who rises: a phoenix from the pillows*]

DESDEMONA 'Tis strange, I'faith. 'Tis passing wondrous strange.

CONSTANCE Desdemona

DESDEMONA *O perjured* pedant, *thou dost stone my heart.*

CONSTANCE [*About to introduce* JULIET] Desdemona, this is-

[DESDEMONA *brings the pillow down on* CONSTANCE*'s head*]

CONSTANCE No! Help!!! [*Muffled etc. . . .*]

JULIET Hold!

DESDEMONA Thy fool's cap is a Turkish document,
and thou, base trumpet, has seduced my lord!

[DESDEMONA *raises the pillow*]

CONSTANCE No! No way, I swear!

[*The pillow comes down again.* JULIET *grabs another pillow and offers it to* DESDEMONA]

JULIET Kill me in her stead!

[DESDEMONA *ignores* JULIET]

DESDEMONA I saw thee fingering his very jewels!
A diamond necklace that would ransom kings!

[*Pillow up*]

JULIET [*Exiting*] Help! Murther!

[CONSTANCE, *her head still beneath the pillow, reaches under her shirt, yanks off the diamond necklace, and holds its broad golden clasp before* DESDEMONA*'s eyes*]

DESDEMONA Ah ha! [*Reading inscription*] "For gentle Desdemona,
upon thy birthday, love Othello."

[CONSTANCE*'s hands drop to the bed and go limp*]

> [*Smiling*] Oh. It is my birthday today. I had forgot. [*To* CONSTANCE] I'm sorry. [*Suddenly remembering*] Constance! [*Whips the pillow up*]
> *Not dead? Not yet quite dead?* (80-81)

In this scene, Desdemona reappears in the play to murder Constance for mistakenly believing that the protagonist is having an affair with the Moor. If, as Thomas Rymer noted in his *Short View of Tragedy*, "[f]rom all the tragedies acted on our English stage, *Othello* is said to bear the bell away" ([1693] 1970, 86), the pillow scene in the original play is considered "the top scene, the scene that raises *Othello* above all other tragedies on our theatres" ([1693] 1970, 118). Given that parody foregrounds MacDonald's adaptation of this scene by rewriting the scene as if it were a pyjama party or a pillow battle between friends, one could interpret that MacDonald's reconsideration of the pillow scene is distant from the actual origin, to the extent that it would be even inaccurate to compare both passages as different but related parts of the same spectrum. But, as mentioned in the first chapter, MacDonald partakes of this tradition of understanding Shakespeare's characters -and as the present analysis is carried out, also his most well-known scenes- more as comic than as tragic archetypes. It comes naturally to ask how comic the original pillow scene is, where Desdemona is violently murdered at the hands of blind Othello. Everywhere readers and audiences look, they find monstrous instances of tragic decorum in the mistreatment of Desdemona, to the extent that "Othello's love and… jealousy are not part of a soldier's character, unless for comedy" (Rymer [1693] 1970, 123). In front of this lack of tragic decorum -after all a tragic hero such as Othello should not be easily driven by lowest kind of passions- as well as the inability to understand this implausibility in the characterisation of Othello and scene design, Rymer concluded that

> There is in this play some burlesque, some humour, and ramble of comical wit, some show, and some *mimicry* to divert spectators… the tragical is plainly none other than a bloody farce, without salt or savour ([1693] 1970, 132).

Rymer was bold enough to argue that the pillow scene reminded him of *commedia dell'arte* when he noted that "such scenes as this have made all the world run after *Harlequin* and *Scaramuccio*" ([1693] 1970, 112). Thus, it is not farfetched to argue that humour, as Thomas Rymer noted in his preface, could be considered in this case a strategy that dampens the violent impact of this tragic scene, in the sense that the pillow scene exemplifies the healing power of humour. If we, as readers or members of the audience, perceive the pillow scene through the lens of comedy, the result is that we are more willing to assimilate its content and

to reach a deeper understanding of the human nature of events in strong opposition to the *unnatural* and *inhuman* nature of Othello as portrayed in the pillow scene. Moreover, this reconsideration of the pillow reinforces the notion that comedy is tragedy's other face. Given the comic matrix of the pillow scene, it does not come as a surprise that MacDonald -more than rewriting it- uses parody so as to make this healing quality of humour as well as the humanistic nature of events more powerful by reconceptualising the pillow scene at the extreme of satire. For this purpose, Desdemona is positioned in the place of Othello, now being the one who decides to murder Constance with a pillow. Through a strategy of bathos, of deflation, MacDonald affects the causes of tragedy, scene design and characterisation. Here, very much as in *Othello*, Desdemona wants to take vengeance on Constance because of jealousy, which is presented as the key force that prompts Desdemona's irritation. Jealousy, then, when placed in the context of tragedy or comedy completely changes the nature of events: while in Shakespeare's play it propitiates the actual death of Desdemona, in the case of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* it is presented as an absurd and silly force which is unable to prompt a tragic scene. In fact, it achieves the opposite effect: it makes us laugh. Thus, MacDonald is not creating a comedy from two tragedies, but emphasising the comic aspects of both *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello.* Through parody, then, MacDonald is able not only to recover the kaleidoscopic nature of the original scene, but she is also able to reconceptualise the imaginary of the pillow scene by placing the female character at the centre of action, in this case, being Desdemona the one who utters Othello's hardest quote: "*Not dead? Not yet quite dead?*" (81).

Through an exercise of dialogism and intertextuality, MacDonald succeeds in populating the pillow scene with feminist meaning, given the nature of the "fight" between Desdemona, Juliet, and Constance, which could be a reflection of the cooperative work between women to resist patriarchal dominance. Here the tragic hero is absent, and although the original pillow scene is tinted with comicality, Desdemona's murder undoubtedly stems from a patriarchal relation of power, in which innocent Desdemona has presumably wounded Othello's privileges as husband. Symbolically, when Desdemona reads the inscription in the diamond necklace that Othello asks Constance to safely keep the reader learns that it is Desdemona's birthday. Here, the helpless victim that the critical community has tied to the character of Desdemona is reborn so as to position herself in the place of Othello, the one who is originally in the position of power. Of course, the gender reversal between Othello and

Desdemona is now at the highest point but the outcome that MacDonald considers is rather distant from the original one. However, although Othello is absent, Desdemona successfully performs his role, which reinforces the dissolution of the gender divide and the idea that they become the same force or *actant* in the imaginary of this same scene. Going back to Souriau's *actants,* it seems appropriate to introduce the *Lion* at this position:

> *The Lion*, or incarnated 'thematic force' of the drama, residing in its principal character (the protagonist- Prop's 'hero'). This character 'represents and puts into play the force which generates all the dramatic tension present' (p. 85). The embodied force in question might be love, ambition, honour, jealousy, etc. (quoted in Elam [1980] 2002, 114).

Undoubtedly, in Shakespeare's *Othello*, the Moor, is presented as the *Lion*, the embodiment or incarnation of jealousy, or the thematic drive. In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, Desdemona becomes the *Lion*, since jealousy -the thematic force- is transferred to her. This is just another instance that reinforces the present section's thesis. Although this gender reversal could be considered -and at the most superficial level results in- an empowerment of female characterisation as far as MacDonald gives voice to Desdemona and Juliet, this reconsideration of *actants*, which works through a strategy of bathos and dissociation between gender and stock-characters, is MacDonald most valuable tool through which to reconcile with Shakespeare discourse. By overtly placing Shakespeare's scenes in the realm of comedy and exploiting their hinted humour, MacDonald squeezed Shakespeare's plays so as to superimpose humanistic concerns above gender or generic conventions, which have historically tamed the Bard's mosaic writing. To sum up, it could be concluded that the neutral gender approach, which is seen both in relation to the metafictional (the cast) and the fictional (considering the gender of the play's characters, the stock-character division, and the nature of the scenes revisited) is taken in order to reconcile with Shakespeare's discourse at different but closely interrelated levels. On the one hand, through the dissolution of the gender divide MacDonald recuperates the polyphonic nature of Shakespeare's discourse, which resists literary labels. As analysed, in this and the first chapter, the female characters he created, such as Desdemona, or Juliet, have been subjugated to stereotypes that the Academia has created about them, not Shakespeare's himself. Secondly, by rewriting *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* taking the same characters, symbols, motifs, scenes, and languages, into a comedy MacDonald frees the modern reception and interpretation of Shakespeare's discourse by reclaiming their humanistic nature above generic and gender conventions.

4. Constance as the *Carnivalesque Fool*

The third and last chapter of this paper revolves around Constance, whose process towards self-discovery will be mirrored on Bakhtin's notion of the *carnivalesque fool*, which is nurtured by his linguistic theory. Although at the end of the play, Constance is revealed to be the wise fool who "defuse[s] the tragedies by assuming centre stage as comic hero" (14), her introspective process towards individuation has not been analysed neither in the light of Bakhtin's theory nor in relation to the Shakespearean wise fool. Her evolution not only as a woman, but also as a character, runs along the deconstructing of the opposing female archetypes as embodied in Desdemona (*miles gloriosus*) and Juliet (*adolescent amator*). One of the reasons that explains why MacDonald appropriates Shakespeare's characters is to show the dynamic and fluctuating nature of identity itself, since all the play's characters are subject to open and new interpretations by subverting the meaning presumably created about them. This reconsideration of Constance also works through a process of what Bakhtin terms *dialogism*. By the end of the play, Constance's identity will be constructed from the values she has selected from Desdemona and Juliet respectively in order to become the Constance she wants to be, showing how her "own ideologemes are made clear in the process of articulating [her] values to others and assimilating others' values to [her] own emerging ones" (Bauer 1988, 11).

Before analysing Constance's individuation process reflecting her evolution on the transition from the Bakhtinian fool to the Shakespearean wise fool, a brief introduction to the Bard's wide variety of fools should be offered in order to frame Constance within this tradition. Readers and scholars of Shakespeare know that the fool is an enduring character that not only inhabits the world of literature: the fool archetype is present in our daily lives, and is fairly represented in many modern protagonists inside the realm of the media, as this chapter will develop further. Shakespeare's fools were normally male characters, though very different in nature: Feste in *Twelfth Night* is a manipulator and a trickster, Puck in *A Midsummer's Night Dream* achieves his purposes through magical and mischievous practices, the wise fool in *King Lear* drives the course of action and, as Constance explains, is a fool "who can comfort and comment, but who cannot alter the fate of the tragic hero" (14), Touchstone -the court jester of Duke Frederick- is an insightful creature who comments and allows the spectator to gain a better insight of the play, etc. As can be appreciated, Shakespeare created a canon of fool characters as influential and rich in nature as in

characterisation. Although there is a great deal of fools, they could be divided according to two main categories: the natural fool, and the wise fool. While the former is destitute of wit and truth, the latter "mocks and criticises the flaws of other characters and society" and in his "laughter […] the voice of wisdom is heard" (Tekalp and Isik 2012, 1161). The wise fool marks "the pivoting moment of foolery in Shakespeare's works" and through them "folly moves from margins to centre stage" (Bell 2011, 21). The great variety of prototypes, as well as the fact that "the words 'fool', 'folly' or 'foolish' appear six hundred times in the body of his work" (Bell 2011, 11) evidence Shakespeare's appreciation of these characters. In having a female protagonist who could be considered and analysed in the light of the wise fool, MacDonald offers another wink through which to reconcile with Shakespeare, while at the same time engaging in the politics of gender reversal and female empowerment upon which *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is built.

The Constance who is introduced at the beginning of the play is, nevertheless, far from being the natural Shakespearean fool. If she represents the natural fool, her characterisation moves beyond the humorous and ridicule to reach a grotesque mixture of shame and self-pity. She is presented as the typical insecure, timid and unattractive PhD student who "eats Velveeta cheese" (a clear reference to her mouse persona or the mask she needs to get rid of), and wears "a coat, boots and a bright red woollen toque with a pom-pom" (7), so typical of the tragedy. In fact, Constance's costume shares many similarities with the tragic jester who appears in the 1862 painting by the polish Jan Matejko entitled *Stánczyk*. The fool, who has fallen in deeper despair after Smolensk has fallen, wears red clothing, but his red toque from which three pom-poms emerge best represents him. While many scholars have considered Matejko's fool a symbol of Poland's fight for independence, others have argued that the jester's costume came to influence the representation of Shakespeare's fools in the 19th century[11]. Throughout Constance's first intervention, she is referred to as Connie. More concretely, "to con someone" signifies to mock someone, or to make someone believe something that is not true; thus, from her own name, which stands in clear concordance to her identity, it can be inferred that Connie is someone childish and who lacks -or hides her- personality. These aspects of her persona are displayed when she interacts with both male and female characters.

[11] See Pelc, Janusz, Buchwald-Pelcowa, Paulina, Otwinowska, Barbara. 1989. *Jan Kochanowski 1584 - 1984 : epoka - twórczość - recepcja*. Lublin: Wydawnictwo Lubelskie, pp. 425-443.

Professor Night and Iago define Constance through the use of animal imagery. They are representatives of the shadow archetype in Jung's terminology, which is an archetype that reflects a hidden aspect of our personality. As its name suggests, this archetype is "dark, shadowy, unknown and potentially troubling" (Jung 1959, 124). Constance is referred to as "titmouse" (15), "little tiny green creature" (18), and "pet" (19) -a clear allusion to her domesticated identity- by Professor Claude. Iago, due to his evilness and his great scepticism towards "Othello's vestal mascot, Desdemona's cherished pet" (34), believes that Constance is a "bookish mouse" (35). In these aforementioned instances, it can clearly be seen how MacDonald appropriates one of the most well-known linguistic devices of Shakespeare's *Othello*, in which animal imagery is used -especially by Iago, who couples animals and characters- to emphasise the different characters' nature.

As previously introduced, Constance is the target of a torrent of abuse from both the masculine and feminine perspective. As she explains to Desdemona, this last fact is quite "[i]ronic really, since in [her] world, women are supposed to be afraid of mice" (30). But rather than being afraid of the protagonist, Julie (symbolically played out by the same actress as Juliet) is a student who takes advantage of Constance. When she goes to Constance's office because she has not handed in an essay on deadline, she says: "I like your hair like that. It's really pretty" in order to avoid Constance's rejection. Julie mocks her by commenting and lying on her physical appearance, as if trying to comfort her by praising her non-apparent beauty -a kind of cruel joke that heightens Constance's inability to understand herself and emphasises her growing insecurity, since she "vaguely touches her hair below the toque" (9) as if she really believed in Julie's dubious compliment. On the other hand, Ramona (who also shares the same actress with Desdemona) shows confidence and security in herself. She will marry Claude (as she calls him) and she has won the Rhodes. Ramona severely lectures Constance by warning her about the perils of alcohol consumption in universities, when she explains with an air of superiority that "Coors beer is part of the right-wing infrastructure that has brought this hemisphere to its knees". Constance, being eclipsed by the student's confidence and afraid of Ramona's reprisal, "picks up her beer, goes to throw it away, looks around, then drains it furtively and pitches it into the wastebasket" (12), as if the police were to catch her. Since Constance is in love with Professor Claude, Ramona represents a reminder of how other women succeed where she fails in relation to both love and professional career.

But abuse against Constance is not limited to verbal attacks. Although Professor Night "is about the same age as Constance", the world of Academia has not treated Constance on equal terms. Professor Knight stands as "a symbol not only of sexual and academic inequality, but also of colonial repression" (Harrington 2007, 127), for as he epitomises the British colonial values. As the narrator explains, he "is about the same age as Constance, is perfectly groomed and brogued, speaks with an Oxford accent, and oozes confidence" (15). He exploits her by having Constance ghost writing his papers. She is treated with paternalism, when he argues "[y]ou must learn to relax, little titmouse" (15), or when he tries to convince Constance that "[t]he best tenured minds in the world have sought to translate [the Gustav manuscript] for the past three hundred years. What gives you the notion you're special?" (16). The Professor's sexist attitude may well be linked to the actual debate against the discrimination of women in Queen's University at the time -the socio-historical context in which Constance is subjected to unfair treatment.

Another important issue that should be tackled in relation to Constance is that she is presented as a stereotype of the female consumer who is subject to the dictums of modern North American society "through a cluster of topoi properly belonging to a television-style nationalism based on simplistic stereotypes" (Djordjevic 2003, 103). She drinks "Coors Light beer" (10), smokes "Players Extra Light cigarettes" (14), and eats "Velveeta cheese" (7), but "the fact that she is a vegetarian and indulges in products that are characterised by the adjective 'light' […] identifies her as a female consumer" and present her as the product of the "superficiality of modern culture" (Djordjevic 2003,103). Constance, thus, is presented as the last victim -being both female and Canadian-, through which MacDonald can launch national and economical political messages on gender inequality. The sensitive reader, however, soon feels sympathetic when confronted with this unscrupulous mistreatment of the protagonist, even more when s/he laughs at Constance's situation -a spectacle that unfortunately is not totally cut off from many modern heroines' tragedies. Indeed, the fact that the character of Constance is so appealing has its roots in the similarities between Constance and the far from stereotypical situations that women in her almost thirties are forced to face in their job positions, love relationships, even with regards to the female ideal of beauty.

Such female characters, "othered" by the monological dominant discourse, can be best represented through the figure of the fool. However, Constance is far from fitting in the description of the Shakespearean wise fool, which -as explained before- stands for a male

defined by intelligence and knowledge. It could be argued that she is in much more in concordance with Bakhtin's ideal, which is bounded by incomprehension and exclusion. In her essay "Female Grotesques", Mary Russo defines these characters as "repressed and undeveloped" (1986, 219). For these naïve female characters "stupidity (a form of resistance) forces the unspoken into the open, thus making them vulnerable to interpretation, contradiction and dialogue" (Bauer 1988, 11). Constance's naivety is epitomised in the symbols that define her at the beginning of the play, and which will recurrently appear throughout the whole play since, as she explains, "one can't throw away the garbage" (31) of the past so easily. Before embarking on her journey, she decides to throw away to the wastebasket the "bronze wings that [her] Brownie pack gave [her]," "her Appendix" (given by the doctor in a "baby food jar"), "the fountain pen [she] made from [her] parakeet, Laurel," and her "fool's gold" (21). Metaphorically, the dialogic process of identity construction starts when she decides to get rid of her childish personality. This is fictionalised in the play when Constance encounters Desdemona and Juliet through a process of what Bakhtin calls *hybridization* -"the mixing, within a single concrete utterance, of two or more different linguistic consciousness, often widely separated in time and social space" (Clark and Holquist 1981, 429).

Her fate starts to change when she realises that they have all made a "laughingstock" and a "crackpot" (37) of her -this "all" encompassing the play's characters as well as the stereotypes that the literature, media, consumer society, beauty standards, among others, have tried to impose on women throughout the years in order to suppress their true selves among the claustrophobic bards of the "female ideal" cell. Constance's brilliance and profound wisdom is appreciated in her understanding of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* as comedies. She is able to perceive the comic matrix of these two plays, as well as the humour that surrounds many of these two masterpieces' scenes that remain in the dark. Gina Barreca argues that when "you see humour in a situation, it implies that you can also then imagine how the situation could be altered" ([1991] 2013, 19), an idea which brings us back to Constance rewriting *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* into comedies. In the same vein, Constance can avoid her tragic fate through humour, a tool that has been used by some of the play's characters to take advantage of Constance's intellect, but that now will be manipulated by the comic heroine in an excellent manoeuvre of subversive linguistic appropriation. By bringing humour to the extreme, Constance will emerge as a phoenix that beautifully

resurrects from its ashes. From the abuses she is subjected to, she will gain the strength that she needs so as to find her true self and to turn her tragedy into a comedy.

When Constance travels to Cyprus and interrupts the well-known handkerchief scene -the pivotal point in which tragedy and comedy battle to define the course of Shakespeare's play- Constance firmly believes that she has "wrecked a masterpiece" and "ruined the play" turning "Shakespeare's *Othello* to a farce" (25). But, as Viola explains in *Twelfth Night* "[t]his fellow is wise enough to play the fool, [a]nd to do that well craves a kind of wit" (Shakespeare 2007, 673). Constance is well aware that she is pocking fun at *Othello*'s most important scene, illustrating Gina Barreca's belief that "women look at those in power, or at those institutions we were taught to revere, and laugh." In this way, "women's comedy is more 'dangerous' than men's, because it challenges authority by refusing to take it seriously" (Barreca [1991] 2013, 14). This idea could perfectly be applied to the scene where Constance interrupts the fight between Mercutio and Tybalt -the *Augenblick* in *Romeo and Juliet.* After this incident, "Constance nervously bites her thumbnail", an action that in modern times delivers a completely different message form the one it had during the Elizabethan period:

TYBALT *Do you bite your thumb at me sir?!*
CONSTANCE No! I just bite my nails, that's all.
TYBALT Do you bite your nails at me sir?!
CONSTANCE No I swear! Look, I'll never bite them again. This'll be a great chance for me to quit once and for all. Thanks.

In an exercise of *dialogism* and intertextuality, MacDonald appropriates the Elizabethan insulting sign of "biting one's thumb" -if one is fluent in Elizabethan gestures, s/he knows that it conveys the same meaning as "flipping the bird"- to create this comic situation in which Constance not only faces Tybalt's defiance, but she also resolves the situation through this comic misunderstanding. The protagonist is now closer to the wise fool stock-character, who "show[s] their intelligence by twisting the meaning of words and engaging in language puns, riddles, and games" (Tekalp and Isik 2012, 1168).

During her stay in Cyprus, the reader gains a new insight into Constance's personality. Othello believes that she is "a learned oracle" who has landed in Cyprus to "read the guts of sheep for signs to prophesy [his] battles with the Turk". When, in front of this grandiosity that surrounds the protagonist, she plainly explains that "[she] only known[s] of [his] domestic life" (25), the reader realises that humour allows Constance to gain control over this new comic situation which she is actually leading. When Desdemona enters on stage, she defines

Constance as a "learnèd lady […] most rare in kind", a "virgin oracle!" and "[b]rave agèd maid" who "wonders all alone!". The comic heroine replies: "I'm really more of an armchair traveller. In fact this is the biggest trip I've made. I've only gone on package tours" (28). Beyond the clear redefinition of Constance by Othello and Desdemona, who emphasise the positive aspects of her personality which had gone unnoticed throughout her first intervention, these are just two quick examples that show how Constance's recontextualisation in her unconscious allows her to explore another façade of her personality that was hidden behind the mask of linguistic abuses from male and female characters.

When later in the play, Constance tells Desdemona about her relation with Professor Night, the protagonist explains:

> For ten years I… assisted him, by writing.
> Some articles he would have writ himself,
> had he the time, but he's a busy man.
> Now he's got tenure and an Oxford post
> I hoped was meant for me (36).

As in traditional forms of therapy, Constance exemplifies Gina Barreca's idea that "our disappointments can be transformed through our ability to tell the story to someone else" (Barreca [1991] 2013, 22), which is presented as the first step towards redefining her personality. When Desdemona firmly believes that Constance has been "ten years an inky slave in paper chains!" (36), and she consequently must "slay Professor Night!", the protagonist explains:

> Not that I'm some kind of feminist.
> I shave my legs and I get nervous in a crowd-
> It's just that… I was labelled as a crackpot,
> by the sacred herd of Academe;
> and after years spent as a laughingstock,
> I finally came to think that it was true.
> But, Desdemona, now that I've met you,
> I want to stand out in the field and cry, "Bullshit!" (37).

This comic passage stands as an appropriate example to show how Constance has been empowered, or in other words, she has assumed the leadership not only with Night, but also with her new understanding of herself, since she portrays her tragic situation with a sense of humour by reversing the use of animal imagery (in this case to attack the realms of Academia) that had originally been use to underestimate her by the shadow archetype, echoing Barreca

when she argues that "the ability to joke, a confident sense of humour, is as much a leadership quality in women as it is in men" (Barreca [1991] 2013, 5).

On the other hand, this fragment is interesting for analysis because of the way it is written. Constance uses blank verse and iambic pentameter to convey almost indecorous images and pitiful messages, such as "shaving legs", "getting nervous", being "laughingstock" and a "road-kill" (45). The point in which Constance realises this change in her eloquence assumes central importance:

> I speak in blank verse like the characters:
> unrhymed iambical pentameter.
> It seems to come quite nat'rally to me
> I feel so eloquent and…
> eloquent.
> My god. Perhaps I'm on an acid trip.
> What if some heartless student spiked my beer?! (34).

These two fragments evidence MacDonald's mastery with language, who is able to imitate Shakespeare in his use of the blank verse. Undoubtedly, this is a clear example of linguistic appropriation that eschews the *single-voice-discourse* and linguistic authority by claiming a multi-vocal narrative in order to keep the text fluid. This passage is also comic. While saying that speaking in iambic pentameter is "quite nat'rally" and that she "feel[s] so eloquent", she is utterly unable to finish the sentence, and she is forced to repeat the same word. Thus, these lines prove that writing in iambic pentameter is not "natural", only for geniuses such as Shakespeare and MacDonald. MacDonald goes further so as to show the clash between the blank verse and the vernacular by having Constance crying "bullshit!". When Desdemona joins Constance in her fight to wreak vengeance on Professor Night, they shout at the same time "Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!!" (38). Beyond the dramatic impact of having the fair lady shouting slang words, this linguistic act of cooperation between both women becomes an act of liberation, since Desdemona has also internalised Constance's discourse (and, as a result, her perspective as a character), an act which emphasises MacDonald's play as a multi-focal text too, or in Marta Dvorak words, "a feminist dramatic comedy" (1994, 133). In the same vein, this reappraisal of Shakespeare's discourse and characters through cooperation invites us to strengthen MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation through humour. As Dvorak explains:

> The primary source of humour thus resides in the difference of scale. MacDonald is engaging in an exercise in scaling down. Her strategy is that of bathos: to deflate

> rather to inflate, through […] the breaking of decorum by prosaic, lowly, even scatological lexicon and abrupt shifts in diction (1994, 130).

In this light, then, MacDonald's strategy of "deflation", which operates on every single aspect of the play (from stylistic bathos to the deconstruction of Othello from tragic hero to the *miles gloriosus*, among other aspects), works to have the opposite effect on the reader: far from undermining MacDonald's play, the strategy of bathos helps to position *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* at the same privileged position which is enjoyed by Shakespeare's tragedies, demonstrating how the genres of comedy and tragedy can be equally valuable, in extension to Bakhtin's theory regarding poetry or epic in relation to novel and theatre. Through this self-discovery, Constance has learned not only to appreciate the powerful aspects of her personality rather than the pitiful, but she has also internalised Desdemona's fighting instinct and her violent streak, to the extent that when Desdemona and Iago battle, Constance interrupts the argument by almost killing Iago. She acknowledges:

> Dear God, I could have murdered that poor
> man.
> I saw a flash of red before my eyes.
> I felt a rush of power through my veins.
> I tasted iron blood inside my mouth.
> I loved it! (47).

The problem arouses when Constance is not able to find a balance between Desdemona's violent personality and her own identity. Acknowledging and acquiring Shakespeare's heroine personality is not enough; she has to learn how to dominate Desdemona's archetype. That explains why she needs to meet Juliet for she is too impregnated with Desdemona's personality. In Act III, Constance meets Juliet at the masquerade ball in Verona. Juliet stands as the other archetype, by being portrayed as the *adolescent amator* who is in love with Romeo. The highly symbolic nature of their first meeting at the masked wedding feast at Capulet Hall -where Constance wears a half mouse mask- must be taken into account. Symbolically, Constance is at the middle of her process of individuation, but she must still learn from Juliet's personality. While in her first meeting with Desdemona, Constance has come to terms with her exploitation at hands of Professor Night, in this second encounter their "love" story gets tints of romantic and Petrarchan love, the kind of love that kills Romeo and Juliet in Shakespeare's tragedy. Juliet's advice to "[i]mpale thy cleaved heart upon a sword!"

is followed by Constance: "[y]es O yes!!! I wish I had the nerve to do it right in front of everyone while standing in the cafeteria line!."

From Juliet she has learned that love is not bad in its nature and, most importantly, that her "quest means more [to her] than love or death" (71). Before that, when she intends dying with Juliet, after Constance has explained her relation with Professor Knight, she has been controlled by the Juliet archetype and Desdemona is needed again to allow Constance to find the balance. It is not until the Desdemona appears and tries to kill her -taking the role of Othello in the famous pillow scene- that the heroine takes action for the first time in the play. Constance prevents Desdemona and Juliet from fighting and obliges them to recognise their faults in a very comedic way:

DESDEMONA Nay, come and kill.
JULIET Nay, stay and die.
DESDEMONA Nay come!
JULIET Nay stay!
DESDEMONA Nay kill!!
JULIET Nay die!!
CONSTANCE Nay nay!!- Nay. Just… nay… both of you. I've had it with all the tragic tunnel vision around here. […] Desdemona, I thought you were different; I thought you were my friend. I worshiped you. But you're just like Othello- gullible and violent. Juliet, if you really loved me, you wouldn't want me to die. But you were more in love with death, cause death is easier to love (86).

This key dialogue advances two possible analyses. On the one hand, this quote brings us back to the idea of the Bakhtinian fool. Bakhtin argues that "stupidity (incomprehension) in the novel is always polemical: it interacts dialogically with an intelligence (a lofty pseudo intelligence) with which it polemicizes and whose mask it tears away" (1981, 403). As Bauer argues, "the "fool" serves to defamiliarise the conventions which have been accepted as "natural," as "myth" (1988, 13), or, in Bakhtin's words, they show "a failure to understand languages that are otherwise generally accepted and that have the appearance of being universal" (1981, 404). Constance reaches the end of her unconscious journey when she realises that she is both the wise fool and author of the Gustav manuscript. This achievement, however, has a more important purpose. Her initial stupidity, or, her position as outsider, has been the powerful tool that has helped her to deconstruct different normatives based on gender expectations and identities, stereotyped in all the play's characters. Now, Constance

has the eyes and the ears to understand herself and to read the three pages of the Gustav manuscript that are central to the construction of her true soul. This has been possible precisely because she has realised that she does not fit in the discourses promoted by the play's characters -their "universal languages"-, but in her own understanding of these discourses.

On the other hand, both Desdemona and Juliet allow Constance to realise her potential; "their passionate natures, while extreme, display aspects of herself that Constance has denied, and enable her to move beyond victimhood" (Harrington 2007, 129). This position of victimhood can be read as particularly Canadian, as articulated by Margaret Atwood in her *Survival* (1974). Harrington argues that "acknowledging your victimhood but accepting its inevitability […] became critical orthodoxy in Canadian literary studies for some time, although it has in recent years been challenged" (2007, 129). *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, rather than fighting against this inevitable and irremediable victimhood, could be presented as a comedy which questions this said Canadian topic. It should be remarked that the comic heroine, who is both female and Canadian, escapes her fixed role in Queen's University through humour. She does not only refuse her victimhood, but that of Shakespeare's characters by giving a comic twist to Othello, Desdemona, Juliet and Romeo. This is another hint at MacDonald's discourse of reconciliation: rather than a critique to Shakespeare's tragedies, the play celebrates Linda Hutcheon's influential description of parody as a "combination of respectful homage and ironically thumbed nose" (1985, 33). As Louise Harrington explains, the play "can be seen as both subverting and embodying the time-honoured notion that great literature provides us with role models and that Shakespeare can change our lives" (2007, 129-130). Symbolically, Constance, Desdemona and Juliet now "share the self-same star" (69). Constance's process of rebirth, an idea that is previously symbolised in the fountain pen and its clear reference to regeneration, has ended after three days in which she has acquired the traits that define Shakespeare's wise fool (wisdom, experience, and knowledge) only after overcoming the problems that the Bakhtinian fool presents (exclusion and incomprehension). Constance can now celebrate her re-birth-day, which is symbolised in "the mystic 'marriage of true minds'" (6). This ending is a shared option by many women writers, whose "plays conclude with groups of women [who] usually drop both men and marriage from their definitions of happiness" (Carlson 1991, 238).

As MacDonald, they advocate for "endings which overturn established generic conventions, such as the preference for birth as closure" (Carlson 1991, 240).

As Dale M. Bauer argues "[t]he art of reading is one of the modes by which we acquire our social -indeed- gendered-orientation or identification with the world, as a form of cultural contact" (1988, 3). Constance recalls the figure of the postmodern reader, a space in which different discourses fluctuate. The play implies that readers of Shakespeare, such as MacDonald or Constance, become *inscriptors*, since the reader's own perceptions are also reflected in the interpretation and reception of Shakespeare's plays. Since reading is a tool through which to build the "gendered identification with the world", it can also be used to de-gender the traditional dichotomy between female reader and male author. These division gains significance if Shakespeare and MacDonald are taken into account: Shakespeare's works have built an imaginary of female archetypes that has had a huge impact on the literary creation of female characters. In MacDonald's play, the figure of the female reader threatens the absolute power of the male author through the process of inserting her own ethos in the interpretative process. After having acknowledged, understood, and dominated the archetypes that have defined Constance, she becomes Constance L., which could refer to the laurel wreath of the poet. Now, with the golden pen the heroine can use her own language to define herself. Writing, thus, become the essence of the process of individuation and its importance is shown from the very beginning, since the first word of the play is "pen". In her "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema", Laura Mulvey argues that women

> stand in patriarchal culture as signifier for the male other, bound by a symbolic order 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 (1975, 7).

Through the act of what George Landow coined *wreading* (writing and reading), MacDonald makes evident that Constance refuses to be a mirror on which mistaken interpretations from male and female characters are to be projected. She becomes a "maker of meaning" rather than a "bearer of meaning". Constance has shown how the "story is not a solid construction built to contain or exclude us; a woman reading is a woman writing her own story" (Curran 2001, 219). As has been mentioned earlier, Constance is an admirer and expert of Shakespeare's plays. But after her quest, she has learnt one of the Bard's best and most valuable pieces of advice: "a fool thinks himself to be wise, but a wise man knows himself to be a fool" (Shakespeare 2007, 518). Constance is just an example of the appropriation and

rewriting of the Shakespearean fool from the feminist perspective. The wise fool stock-character is hidden in many celebrated female characters (and not necessarily feminist) who appear in TV series and movies, ranging from Carrie Bradshaw to Bridget Jones (writers of a newspaper column and a diary, respectively). As Constance, they are women in their thirties who do not fit inside hegemonic discourses of normative identity or female stereotypes. Through humour and irony they are capable of reverting their tragic situations in order to become the protagonist of hilarious tales, showing how "a sense of humour is now standard issue for the modern heroine, replacing even beauty as the essential ingredient for some writers" (Barreca [1991] 2013, 11).

The role of Constance in the play is the most significant one, to the extent that she could be considered a space in which gender and genre conventions are altered to be later reconciled. This section has discussed how Constance has been able to develop her sense of humour by reversing its negative connotations; she has changed her position from being the target of abuse to become an agent who knows how to defend herself through linguistic appropriation, while at the same time gambling with the tragic and comic conventions. In the next subsection, this notion of Constance as a space will be further developed.

4.1 Constance as the Third Space

The significant influence that the Swiss psychiatrist and founder of the school of analytical psychology Carl Gustav Jung extends in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet*) exceeds the limits of inspiration. Beyond the introductory quote by Jung at the beginning of the play, also the fact that Constance shares the same name as Lake Constance near which Jung was born, and that the manuscript that the heroine has to translate is symbolically called the Gustav manuscript, the "'meaning' of MacDonald's play, or the symbolic end of the heroine's journey, is closely related to Carl Jung psychological theory" (Djordjevic 2003, 103). Jung's theory of the archetypes, his studies of the collective unconscious, and the findings regarding the working of the human psyche foreground many of the thematical concerns of MacDonald's play. Since this paper is reaching its end and the links between Jung and MacDonald could be in themselves the germ for an entire essay, this subsection is not going to deepen into general issues. In order to support the main conclusion, as well as to finish up the previous sections, however, Jung studies on alchemy as a symbolic representation of the individuation process and the exploration of the unconscious as he developed in his ground-breaking *Psychology and Alchemy* must be taken into consideration. The connections between Jung and *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* have already been tackled, although superficially, by Laura Snyder in "Constance Ledbelly's Birthday. Construction of the Feminist Archetype of the Self in Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*"; her research, nonetheless, is limited to Constance as regards to the notion of "opposites", which is something that will be reconsidered.[12]

As has been previously introduced in this paper, Constance's quest could be considered an oneiric and unconscious process through which she needs to explore other aspects of her personality, which are embodied in two opposing archetypes -Desdemona (*miles gloriosus*) and Juliet (*adolescent amator*). After she reaches the lowest point in her life, or as Jung termed the *nigredo* (the moment when Professor Claude Night decides to marry Ramona and accepts a position in Oxford that was originally intended for Constance), she needs to find her self-worth through the rejection of what Jung's defined the "shadow archetype" (represented by Professor Night, or Iago). Throughout the whole play, Constance's

[12] See also Norbert Schaffeld's "Shakespeare's Canadian Sister: The Emergence of a Female Playwright in Ann-Marie MacDonald's Comedy *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet).*" *Literaturwissenschaftliches Jahrbuch* (2001): 285-301.

evolution towards base selfhood runs parallel to alchemy, a connection that is firstly introduced by the Chorus in the Prologue:

> What's alchemy? The hoax of charlatans?
> Or mystic quest for stuff of life itself:
> eternal search for the Philosopher's Stone,
> where mingling and unmingling opposites,
> transforms base metal into precious gold.
> Hence, scientific metaphor of self:
> divide the mind's opposing archetypes
> -if you possess the courage for the task-
> invite them form the shadows to the light; (5-6).

Constance's introspective journey is symbolically presented as an alchemical process of metallic distillation, an idea that directly connects with Jung's metaphor of alchemy as a "symbolic system for the transformation of human spirit from its lead-like state of ignorance into the gold of enlightenment" (Jung [1953] 1968, 306). Constance's playful surname -Ledbelly- sonorously resembles the word "lead" (pronounced as /lɛd/), which (surprisingly) is a metal. Going further, it could be argued that Constance's evolution shares many similarities -at a symbolic level- with the spectacle of transformation that mercury offers. This substance provides a "tortuous ordeal of purification and renewal" (Jung [1953] 1968, 288), or in other (and more revealing) words, the transformation and subsequent release of a spirit "captured in matter" (Jung [1953] 1968, 295) through alchemical operations -a liberation that could be perfectly applied to Constance's herself. Furthermore, there is another link that strengthens this symbolic interpretation of Constance's process in connection to quicksilver: this element exhibits remarkable properties, since it is the only metallic element that is liquid in its natural form considering both temperature and pressure conditions -an idea that will be further reconsidered.

But the connection with mercury moves beyond the realm of alchemy to reach the world of deities. Carl Jung himself considered the arrangement of deities according to triplets. It is generally known that Mercury -the Greek Hermes- is the god of "shopkeepers and merchants, travellers and transporters of goods, and thieves and tricksters" ("Encyclopaedia Britannica" 2014). Since Mercury is also a multifocal god, he is considered the keeper of boundaries, a kind of bridge between the upper and lower world of the living and the death. While the two snakes -male and female kissing- are representatives of the underworld, his wings stand for the upper world. More than that, Mercury is the god of hermaphrodites par

excellence since it is associated with Gemini -the twins-, which is crucial to this analysis of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. The connection between both the metal and the god that share the same name are already introduced in the prologue, when the Chorus defines m/Mercury (the only explicit reference throughout the whole play) as "that changing element, portrayed as Gemini, hermaphrodite and twin" (6).

After Othello and Constance have established a kind of closer and friendlier relationship, when she is revealed his secret to marry Desdemona, the Moor (in his -at this point- expected aura of grandiosity) tells Constance about his encounter with a beast, which Othello describes as follows:

> Three heads grew from the shoulders of the beast.
> On one the hair was black as ebony,
> the other crown was curlèd angel fair,
> the third head wore a scarlet cap of wool,
> that ended in a foolish bauble bright (43).

This "demon" (43) could be considered a symbol of patriarchal menace -the animal embodiment of the tripartite woman, Desdemona symbolising the warrior, Juliet as passion and sensuality, and Constance as representation of intellect- whose defeat is represented by Othello physically killing the animal representation of Desdemona (the first head), Juliet (the second one), and Constance, this latter being identified as the "third head" with "a scarlet cap of wool, that ended in a foolish bauble bright", a clear connection not only to Constance's "bright red woollen toque with a pom-pom at the end" (7) she is wearing when the play opens, but also to the typical toque so characteristic of the tragic fool's costume as explained in the previous chapter. It is generally acknowledged that jealousy in Shakespeare's *Othello* propitiates the tragedy. This attitude is often portrayed as a male behaviour that is closely associated to the characters of Othello and Iago. This latter's words in Shakespeare's *Othello,* when he metaphorically speaks of "the green-ey'd monster,/ which doth mock/ The meat it feeds on. /That cuckold lives in bliss," (Shakespeare 2007, 2120) are a clear connection to the theme of jealousy, which in *The Merchant of Venice*, Portia also defines as being "green-eyed" (Shakespeare 2007, 445). In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet),* Constance -having avidly read Shakespeare's- asserts: "[i]n some strange way this beast seems so familiar" […] "[y]ou say you killed it dead?." Othello replies: "[t]he demon fell and bled a sea of inky green" (43).

While Shakespeare's associations with colour green are quite negative -being emblematic of jealousy- MacDonald cleverly reverses these connotations, since this "sea of inky green" that remains after Desdemona, Juliet, and Constance have metaphorically been murdered at the hands of Othello, or in other words, after they have not been able to avoid their tragic fates, is a clear hint at the green ink of Constance's fountain pen, which is the most powerful tool the protagonist employs in order to save Desdemona, Juliet and herself from impeding tragedy. By extension, she is also saving Othello and Romeo. Also it should be noted that the first meaning of humour was "any of the various fluids in the body" and "any of the four bodily fluids" ("The Free Dictionary" 2014), an idea which connects pretty well to Constance rewriting Shakespeare's tragedies into a comedy appropriating the same language, characters, and motifs, all these aspects metaphorically symbolised in this liquid or ink that subverts its associations when working in the realm of comedy. What Othello defines as a "beast", "monster", or "demon" stands as the most powerful symbol of female liberation, since through this green monster, jealousy -one of the causes of tragedy, as well as an attribute traditionally associated to Shakespearean male characters- is subverted so as to become the source of the comedy, as well as of female liberation. This animal that for the female gaze is not so threatening is the epitome of linguistic appropriation, then, especially in the case of Constance who, as seen before, has been defined with animal imagery throughout the whole play particularly by Professor Night and Iago in order to undermine and suppress her sense of selfhood. But now the heroine has gotten rid of her mouse persona. In other words, this "little tiny green creature" (18) has metamorphosed into a three-headed monster.

This beast also shares many connotations with the god Mercury. In "Celtic areas, Mercury was sometimes portrayed with three heads or faces, and at Tongeren, Belgium, a statuette of Mercury with three phalli was found" ("New World Encyclopaedia" 2016). In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, this three phalli beast which is reworked in MacDonald's play is to some extent redefined and regenerated into a representation of femininity by having what could be interpreted as three-female heads instead of three phalli, although, as already mentioned, this deity was hermaphrodite. Stemming from these reflections, a close connection can be established between this kind of three-headed animal that is found in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* and the artistic representation of Mercury. As this analysis enfolds, number three gains central importance regarding other aspects of the play; at a structural level, this play is divided into three different acts that divide

the storyline of a plot that elapses during the time span of three days, which indeed could be a biblical reference to the three days in which Christ is crucified and resurrected because, after all, Constance's journey ends with her re-birth-day, or in other words, a resurrection. Three are the central male characters that represent patriarchal authority: Professor Night, Othello, and Iago, and three women are presented as the targets of their abuse that leads to her future empowerment. At the beginning of the play, when Professor Night asks Constance: "What's your schedule like day after tomorrow?" (19), that is, in three days, the reader realises that symbolically it is Constance's thirtieth birthday. Meanwhile, the Gustav Manuscript has also the three pages that Constance must translate in order to build her desired subjectivity.

In front of these winks to number three, together with the role of Constance in the play, it could be argued that the heroine can be considered a *third space*[13] in which opposite ends of different spectrums are brought into dialogue, then included, and ultimately reconciled. The protagonist shares a striking resemblance both to the metal and the god, in the sense that her identity is as fluid and liquid as metal mercury, and her position in the play recalls the role of god Mercury, since she moves in-between boundaries not only in relation to the conscious and unconscious mind, but also -as the title of the play suggests- to the realm of day and night. More significantly, the heroine also travels from the world of tragedy to comedy, which connects pretty well to this Gemini-like nature of Shakespeare's plays, in which tragedy and comedy can be interpreted as the two faces of the same coin resulting from this desire in generic and gender experimentation. More connections can be drawn to reinforce the links between Constance and the metal. Jung defines mercury as "ambiguous, dark, paradoxical, and thoroughly pagan" (Jung [1953] 1968, 289); these traits can perfectly be extrapolated to Constance, due to her "fascination with mystery". As she admits: "I can't help it. I'm a fallen Catholic. It's left me with a streak of 'whodunit'" (17). Moreover, Jung explains that mercury "is the play of colours in the *cauda pavonis* and the division into the four elements" (Jung [1953] 1968, 299), which are also represented in the play as the different objects that Constance throws into the garbage when she decides to put an end to her subjugation: the bronze wings (wind), the appendix (earth), the cigarette but (fire), and finally the beer can (water). These four elements recurrently appear throughout the play, right in the moments when Constance has gone a step further in her individuation process. For instance, when her Brownie wings appear in the hem of Desdemona's dress (in the same way that

[13] Although this term is attributed to Homi K. Bhabha, I will not make use of his theory, since his emphasis is on immigrant communities in the field of postcolonial studies.

Desdemona's handkerchief appears in Iago's hose), Constance is about to travel to Verona, since she has completed the first step in knowledge during her stay in Cyprus. All in all, these four classical elements symbolise the nature of all matter, and the protagonist will have to accommodate these four elements to her persona so as to define her harmonic self.

Furthermore, Constance could also be compared in the light of the figure of the trickster, which operates in the fields of mythology, folklore, and religion, and which exhibits different forms, such as god/dess, woman, man, spirit and anthropomorphic. Lewis Hyde defines the trickster as a "boundary-crosser" who "violates principles of social and natural order, playfully disrupting normal life and then re-establishing it on a new basis" (1998, 134) -a definition that connects pretty well to the role of the wise fool in Shakespearean tragedies. Constance's disruption in Shakespeare's world could be considered a violation of the "natural order" of his tragedies, which Constance frames in the realm of carnival through humour and wit in order to alter their conventions. In his theory of the archetypes, Jung considers this figure no more than a stock character that challenges the foundations of social order and re-establishes it through a sort of catalyst, a process that brings us back to the salvation of Desdemona and Juliet from their tragic fates after Constance's insertion in their realities. The trickster, furthermore, exhibits sharp intellect and secret knowledge; this aspect is also reflected in Constance's personality, when Othello defines her as "a learned oracle" (25), or when Iago asserts, "[s]he hath uncanny knowledge of our lives" and Desdemona replies: "[s]he spake of conjuring" (40) and has "[a] foreign tongue that's known to her alone" (41). But the trickster is generally portrayed as a male character. MacDonald subverts this aspect of the Jungian stock-character by creating a new type of trickster that behaves as Connie, Constance or a Greek boy, again emphasising the hybridity that defines the protagonist throughout the whole play, and ultimately showing how "in order to achieve a fully integrated self, women must bring to consciousness and embrace both male and female, masculine and feminine selves" (Snyder 2006, 43). In the Canadian context, Louis Harrington has superficially considered the relation between Constance and this so common character of native Canadian literature, as "a figure that intervenes in, and rewrites, Judeo-Christian creation myths or other literary and cultural narratives that affirm colonial dominance, such as Shakespeare" (2007, 130).

In this light, Snyder's view shall be contradicted, since more than a mere tool through which to "recongni[s]e and unify her oppositional shadow selves -in the form of

Shakespeare's patriarchal Eros-driven archetypes" (2006, 43), Constance becomes an intermediate space, a kind of no (wo)man's land, in which nothing is in excess, or nothing is antagonistic. That explains why Desdemona and Juliet (although they have also been previously subjugated to the male gaze and interpretation) have not succeed in their endeavour of inscribing or reflecting their whole personalities on Constance; at the end, she has denied to fully internalise Desdemona's and Juliet's most characteristic traits. This fact is of crucial importance because Constance's process of rebirth has been completed after placing herself outside the discourse of both male and female "others"; her individuation ends up by realising that existence is not defined by absolutes that conform to normativity -represented in different stigmatised archetypes-, as for instance Desdemona or Juliet; instead, life is presented as a diverse and "rich Sargasso stew" (86) in which "two plus one adds up to one, not three" (88). This quote brings us back to the monster from the beginning of this section. The first kind of animal that comes to mind is the mythical three-headed dragon, an interpretation that again connects very well with Jung's reflections: "[t]he dragon is probably the oldest pictoral symbol in alchemy of which we have documentary evidence," which appears together with "the legend of 'the One, the All'". He continues:

> the alchemist reiterate that the *opus* proceeds from the one and leads back to the one, that it is a sort of circle like a dragon biting his own tail. For this reason the *opus* was often called *circulare* (circular) or else *rota* (the wheel). Mercurius stands as the beginning and the end of the work: he is the *prima material*, the *caput corvi*, the *nigredo*; as dragon he endeavours himself and as dragon he dies, to rise again in the *lapis* […] He is the hermaphrodite that was in the beginning, that splits into the brother-sister duality and is reunited in the *caniunctis*, to appear once again at the end in the radiant form of the *lumen novum*, the stone. He is metallic yet liquid, matter yet spirit, cold yet fierce, poison ad yet healing draught- a symbol uniting all the opposites (Jung [1953] 1968, 292).

This intermediate space that has been introduced and which is embodied in the figure of Constance is best represented by the image of "the dragon biting his own tail", as Jung explains. The conclusion is clear, then. Constance emerges as a *third space* both for gender -as seen above, she is presented as an hermaphrodite[14] in many instances of the play, being Constance and a Greek boy at the same time-, and genre, since Constance's rewriting of Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* could perfectly stand as the merging between theatrical comedy and tragedy, or, a *third space* in theatre, in which one can see how, indeed,

[14] As explained in the second chapter, all the play's characters could be considered hermaphrodite, since they have occupied different discursive positions. Given the role of Constance within the play, she is presented as the clearest example that embodies this idea.

comedy and humour tint many Shakespearean tragedies, and in reverse, how tragic events are to be found in his comedies. Northrop Frye also conceived literary genres -comedy, romance, tragedy, irony and satire- according to the *cycle* of fourth seasons, as embodied by four mythoi. As he explains, "[t]ragedy seems to move up to an *Augenblick* or crucial moment from which point the road to what might have been and the road to what will be can be simultaneously seen" […] "in that case the crucial moment is for him a moment of dizziness, when the wheel of fortune begins its inevitable cyclical movement downward" (1957, 213). In the same vein, Constance could be the embodiment of this *Augenblick*, a character who -as the god Mercury- moves within the boundaries of tragedy and comedy, plays with their conventions due to her role as wise fool, and finally decides to reverse tragedy in favour of comedy. In her *Women and Comedy: Rewriting the British Theatrical Tradition*, Susan Carlson argues that "comedy has not been as good to its women as the critical community has been accustomed to" (1991, 2) for even "when comic heroines have been created by women, the result is rarely an easy confluence of women and power" (1991, 13). But MacDonald departs from the traditional conventions of comedy -in which the different roles of women are limited by "the treacherous freedom [of] women characters" (1991, 2)- so as to demonstrate how through extreme satire this genre can be empowered and regenerated to suit the needs of today's feminism. After all, another possibility to rewrite *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* could have been sticking to tragedy and supress the tragic hero in favour of tragic heroines. While this option would have elevated the female character to the role of tragic heroine, MacDonald's play is giving importance to a genre that has always been considered inferior not only because comedies have traditionally been considered more "feminine", but also because they have played with an illusion of female agency.

5. Conclusions

This thesis has broadened the scope of MacDonald's play *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* by considering the tensions between gender and genre. The main theoretical framework that has been used embraces the concerns of the Third-Wave together with Bakhtin's theory, a relationship that has been summarised by Rosenthal as follows:

> [B]oth theoretical systems value heterogeneity and diversity; feminism and Bakhtinian theory share a concern for the oppressed and marginali[s]ed others created by the hegemony of dominant, authoritarian, and 'internally persuasive' languages. This celebration of diversity -of heterogeneity (feminist theory) and of heteroglossia (Bakhtinian theory)- allows for a rich dialogue between the two theoretical systems (1994, 153).

This quote is very insightful in the sense that the collaborative work between Bakhtin and feminism is fully appreciated, since it could be argued that the Third-Wave, Bakhtin's theory, and MacDonald's play celebrate the power of diversity over the absolute hegemony of authoritarian discourses. For this purpose, the first chapter has analysed how through a strategy of bathos, Othello and Romeo are redefined from tragic heroes to the stock-characters of the *miles gloriosus* and *adolescent amator* respectively. Furthermore, the neutral gender approach that MacDonald presents has succeeded, since Desdemona and Juliet have also performed the roles of *miles gloriosus* and *adolescent amator* disregarding of their gender. It could be concluded, then, that MacDonald has been able to successfully rewrite the tragedies of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* into a comedy not only through this strategy of bathos, but also by claiming the neutral gender approach concerning stock-characters. Stemming from this, the unbiased gender approach could be considered another dramatic strategy from which to alter generic conventions, and from which to disrupt the old biased assumption that comedies are more feminine, while tragedies are a more masculine genre. In this chapter, a thesis for further research has been presented. MacDonald's play forces a source study, for as the characters that appear in this contemporary comedy recover or make more explicit many of the traits of the characters that Shakespeare adapted himself for his tragedies. MacDonald's play could significantly contribute to the study of Shakespeare's sources, and Chaucer's influence on Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* could be more visible if Shakespeare's tragedies are read in the light of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. Although Chaucer's influence in *Romeo and Juliet* is well-grounded, in the case of *Othello* this thesis is still embryonic.

The second chapter has analysed how gender and genre have traditionally defined and reinterpreted Shakespeare's plays. The focus has been put on how through the altering of these aforementioned constructs the Bard's mastery can be properly appreciated. Reading *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is like rereading *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* through the long-focus lens of Shakespeare's contemporary Canadian sister. After this task, the conclusion is clear. This reversal and final dissolution of gender roles between Othello and Desdemona, and Romeo and Juliet as seen in the first chapter, as well as the recontextualisation of two of the most well-known Shakespearean scenes into a comedy also foster the alteration of generic conventions. Gender roles are dissolved because MacDonald stages this travesty of Shakespeare's *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* into a contemporary comedy that works pretty much as a kind of Bakhtinian carnival on stage, where the suspension of disbelief and of the accepted nature of things makes everything possible. At the same time, the challenging of the gender construct emerges as the most important dramatic strategy from which to transform two Shakespearean tragedies into a contemporary comedy. In this light, MacDonald conclusively demonstrates how the dissolution of the gender construct offers a wide range of possibilities for dramatic development. To clarify this dynamics, the tensions between genre and gender are like a vicious circle; the dissolution of gender roles leads to the dissolution of tragic conventions, but it is precisely because MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is framed into a comedy that the alteration of gender roles works and is accepted by readers/audiences.

The third chapter has focused on Constance's quest of self-discovery and her evolution from the Bakhtinian fool to the Shakespearean wise fool. Through the use of humour she has been able to subvert her situation and position of victimhood as exemplified at the beginning of the play, as well as to discover other aspects of her personality and sexuality that are embodied in Desdemona (the warrior woman) and Juliet (the adolescent in love). Moreover, at the end of the play, the protagonist is revealed to be the wise fool who, through the gambling of conventions in the *Augenblick* of *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello*, has succeeded in her project of saving not only Desdemona and Juliet, but also Othello and Romeo from their tragic fates. It could be interesting to analyse how many female characters from the series or novels are representatives of the Bakhtinian fool type and to demonstrate how their empowerment is always linked to the mastery of their sense of humour.

In the last section, the notion of Constance as a *third space* for gender and genre has been presented. Jung's study of the God and metal M/mercury has been used as the most important theoretical framework in which to settle the present analysis. The analysis of Constance as a third space leads me to reconsider MacDonald's entire literary production is encompassed. After reading many of her most well-known theatre plays and her worth-reading novel *Fall on Your Knees*, I have reached the conclusion that this *third space* of reconciliation is embodied in many of her female heroines, all of them functioning as intermediates but at the same time central characters that allow a dialogue and future reconciliation of different discourses, such as Frances in *Fall on Your Knees*, Jelly in the play *The Attic, the Pearls & Three Fine Girls*, or Pearl MacIsaac in *The Arab's* Mouth, as well as in *Belle Moral*. It is an innovative and worth exploring topic in order to broaden the scope of research of the present paper. As has been mentioned in the introduction, MacDonald's literary body is multifocal in the sense that she writes about diversity. This topic can be explored in relation to these aforementioned female characters who reconcile discourses that operate not only in the realm of feminism, as demonstrated in the present analysis of *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*, but also in relation to religion (Frances in *Fall on Your Knees*), race, or even to literary genres (as is the case of Pearl MacIsaac in *Belle Moral* who tries to reconcile the extremes of rationalism and romanticism through a gothic comedy).

It should be noted that Bakhtin argues that carnival cannot last forever for as if comedy substitutes normality, then comedy becomes oppressive. Concerning the controversial question whether comedy is ultimately conservative or subversive, MacDonald demonstrates how comedy not only "causes a culture to look at itself in a new way" (Henkle 1980, 13), but it also serves to change the status quo. Shannon Hengen argues that

> Gestures toward a new canon therefore emerge, and new candidates for it, a canon in which genre becomes redefined and revalued through the play of gender and culture. For when marginal wins in comedy, comedy itself changes form. What genre is -like what gender is- becomes determined by how they would reshape our world (Hengen 1998, xviii).

Hopes are high that this paper has demonstrated how MacDonald is a potential candidate for this new canon in which genre and gender, humour and irony, director and audience, and author and reader, collaboratively work together to put more laughter in our daily lives, and in doing so raise human nature above discriminatory dynamics of any nature.

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7. Interview Kate Newby

1. **Why did you choose the Vietnam War as the conflict in *Othello* or the Free Love Movement as the context for *Romeo and Juliet*?** Rather than the traditional approach of taking Constance (the protagonist) back in time to a traditional Shakespearean world as is usually done in GND(GMJ) productions, I chose to place the production in the 1970s, during the second wave of feminism, war, and the sexual revolution. Since we set it in the 70s it made sense to focus on the wars of the time (Cyprus/Vietnam) as our inspiration for the world of *Othello* and the Free Love Movement to enhance the sexual teenage drive found in the world of MacDonald's version of *Romeo and Juliet*. This concept fully supported the protagonist's quest for self-discovery, as per female emancipation in the 1970s and MacDonald's take on the *Othello* and *Romeo & Juliet* narratives.

2. **Which are the implications of this recontextualisation? Is it a step further towards deconstructing and subverting the most well known Shakespearean characters?** I would say it was a step further towards heightening the patriarchal themes found in MacDonald's play more than deconstructing and subverting Shakespearean characters.

3. **As you said, the 1970s "was a time when academia in Canada was very much a patriarchy". The theatrical and cultural landscape at that time, which was influenced by the Stratford Shakespearean Festival, was also a tool through which to channel Shakespeare's patriarchal discourse. Is Handsome Alice Theatre claiming Shakespeare's discourse as women's own?** If we were presenting one of Shakespeare's plays, yes, but since we were presenting Ann-Marie MacDonald's feminist satire on the patriarchal world of Academia, Shakespeare, and 20th Century Canadian Theatre practices, the work had already been claimed by the playwright. Our production was simply an all-female meta exploration of MacDonald's work.

4. **Why did you decide to have an all-female cast?** I chose an all-female cast because I was interested in exploring the production through the female lens – basically I reversed the gender role play that traditionally occurred on the stage during Shakespeare's time. As a theatre director and the Artistic Producer of Handsome Alice (a theatre that supports the

female voice), I am politically driven by the desire to provide female theatre makers with the same opportunities as their male counterparts. Of course, as a director, there has to be a justifiable creative reason for messing with casting. My ideals are such that concepts must always serve the play. In the case of GND (GMJ) an all-female cast both served the play and enhanced the narrative beautifully. Ann-Marie MacDonald is a feminist – she wrote a feminist piece, so it seemed appropriate to explore the play with an all-female cast. I may be wrong, but to my knowledge, I don't believe the play has ever been explored in this way and that also interested me.

5. **Which are the implications or the main differences regarding previous adaptations?** I can only compare ours to the original production as that is the only other production I have seen. In the original, the audience was passive in its response to the male/female power dynamics – stereotypes of the submissive female/entitled male as portrayed by female and male actors. Because of this, the audience experiencing the original production did not respond as vocally as ours did to the patriarchal themes MacDonald addresses in her script. In our production, the all- female cast heightened the power dynamics between the genders, making the performance a visceral experience for the audience. They became acutely aware of the gender dynamics when a female actor truthfully portrayed patriarchal figures like Claude Night, Othello and Tybalt. The language, the underlying connotations of the characters' actions, and the absurd nature of how we as a society consider 'normal' gender roles (dominate male/submissive female) acceptable were heightened through our cross-gendered portrayals. Our audience was vocally responsive and actively engaged and that was the direct result of female actors portraying male characters. In the original production the audience was much more passive in their response, they seemed to casually expect/accept the gender dynamics when the male roles were portrayed by male actors.

6. **Considering the cast, is it a compliment or a critique to Elizabethan theatrical conventions of dress in which men played the role of both male and female characters?** It is neither a compliment nor a critique - it was simply a conceptual choice.

7. **As you explained in an interview, the gender of the characters won't be altered. In the original text, we find a Sappho-like Juliet, a warrior Desdemona, an Othello in skirts, and a Romeo in women's clothing. Is the representation of more female-like male characters more difficult than representing empowered female characters taking into account that it is an all-female cast?** No. Our production was simply the reverse of Shakespeare's comedies - a female actor portraying Romeo (male not a female-like male) who transformed into Romiette (sp) (female).

8. **The overall critical assessment of the play has been undertaken through the lens of the politics of gender, alongside the deconstruction of normatives regarding the masculine and feminine "ideal". Do you think that having an all-female cast could relegate the politics of gender to the background?** Not at all. In fact, in our experience it awakened the audiences' awareness of MacDonald's deconstruction of normatives in relation to the masculine and feminine "ideal" and the politics of gender. Female actors portraying male characters truthfully seemed to heighten the absurdity of the gender dynamics found in the text and the narrative.

9. **Your adaptation is a feminist adaptation. As you said in an interview, it makes more sense to have women playing the role of men and women indistinctively. Could you please elaborate on this?** I like to think it was simply a unique production of a feminist play rather than a feminist adaptation. I could have done the same production with an all-male cast which would also have been an interesting exploration. I find the exploration of gender on a humanistic level intriguing and, at times, off-balancing to an audience who is use to gender 'norms' being represented. When presented with female actors portraying male characters or male actors portraying female characters, it holds a mirror up to our gender biases and misconceptions. If actors portray characters in such a way that is gender neutral and human, the idea of gender norms tend to disappear for the audience and what is left is the story.

10. The chronological progression that we find is the following:

• actors playing the role of both male and female characters (Shakespeare's times)

• actors and actresses playing the role of both male and female characters indistinctively (first and subsequent adaptations of *GD(GMJ)*)

• actresses playing the role of both male and female characters (your adaptation)

Could you explain the impact of your adaptation or the differences regarding this progression? I can only speak to this production in relation to Shakespeare's time and audience response. I chose the same approach as in Shakespeare's time but instead of men portraying women, I explored women portraying men. The audiences' response was interesting. Female audience members were extremely vocal, men less so – post- performance reactions from the audience displayed a sense of empowerment from female audience members and an appreciation of experiencing the work of a dynamic female ensemble. In traditional productions of GND(GMJ), the audience tends to passively observe male/female dynamics and accepts them as the norm, in this production the audience was very vocal in its acknowledgement of the gender dynamics found in the narrative. Numerous audience members commented that the Handsome Alice production was their first experience with the play and they had assumed previous productions had always been done with an all-female cast and couldn't imagine seeing it with a mixed-gendered cast. Others, who had experienced previous productions felt this was the first time the play made sense to them. Many felt female portrayals of male characters deepened patriarchal themes found in the text and heightened the comedy.

11. **Is your adaptation the epitome of subversion of the male gaze regarding the representation of female characters?** I doubt it was the epitome but perhaps it was a subconscious attempt.

12. **MacDonald's Othello and Romeo are not portrayed as masculine "ideals". Does your adaptation go a step further in this process of de-masculinising those characters by having an all-female cast?** I would to say, no. Our Othello was very masculine and in some ways more male and sexually virile than some of the male interpretations of Othello I have seen. The portrayal of Romeo worked beautifully due to the small physical frame

and youthful energy of the actor. It was not our intention to de-masculinize the male characters in fact, my intention was for the characters to be portrayed truthfully as the female actors might play the Shakespearean roles in a traditional setting. We allowed the comedy to arise out of circumstance and character relationships.

13. **Does your adaptation strengthen the dissolution of masculinities and femininities?** Yes, and that was my intent. In the words of Simone de Beauvoir, "One is not born, but, rather, *becomes* a woman." Of course the same could be said in relation to men.

14. **Does your adaptation claim both male and female Shakespearean characters as theatrical examples for women's empowerment?** I think MacDonald's play does that.

15. **Do you think that in the original text the nature of the scenes revisited is altered, or, on the contrary, the reader/audience revisits their imaginary of these same scenes? For instance, the scene in the balcony where we have Constance and Juliet.** I think I have answered this in my response to other questions.

16. **The importance of dress is crucial in our understanding of the play, since it not only propitiates many misunderstandings regarding the gender of the characters, but it also illustrates the process towards self-discovery of many of them. Could you comment on the implications of cross-dressing in your adaptation?** The importance of cross dressing was acknowledged in our production just as it would if we were presenting a traditional Shakespearean comedy. Once cross dressing is presented to the audience, the character's physical masque (the dress/costume) should quickly become secondary to the desires and obstacles the character faces.

17. **MacDonald turns two tragedies into a comedy. From what I've read, your adaptation is hilarious. Could you reflect upon the role of humour in your adaptation?** As in any good comedy, humour comes from the circumstances characters find themselves in, the obstacles they face, and the ways and means they attempt to work around and away from their obstacles to obtain what they desire most.

18. **Is humour a tool through which to empower female characters on stage?** The only way female characters are empowered is if they win what they've set out to achieve and that works in both comedy and tragedy. I see humour as a way to let the audience into a world that allows it to feel safe enough to reflect on the themes addressed in the play.

19. **Tragedies were often considered more "masculine", while comedies were a more "feminine" genre. Do you turn this old assumption upside-down by having actresses representing male characters that Shakespeare designed for two tragedies?** The playwright wrote a comedy and in doing so messed with Shakespeare's tragedies. I took it another level of meta by adding the women portraying men who at times portray women and somehow it made MacDonald's concept more humorous.

20. **Is humour a way to satirise phallocentric views about the position of women in tragedies?** Yes!

21. ***GD(GMJ)* could be defined as a feminist dramatic comedy. Is your adaptation opening a new door towards the adaptation of Shakespeare in Canada taken into account that it is something that has never been done before?** Feminist adaptations of Shakespeare's works are occurring across Canada. An all-female version of Julius Caesar is currently being presented in Montreal. Many companies are embracing feminist productions of Shakespeare. The only Canadian theatres where Shakespeare is still presently traditionally, are those whose mandate is to produce only Shakespearean works (ex. Stratford Festival). I recently directed a production of Hamlet with a young female actor playing Hamlet and a young male actor playing Ophelia. It worked beautifully as a gender neutral approach to telling a humanistic narrative about betrayal and revenge. However, I think our production of Ann-Marie MacDonald's script will no doubt open the door to others looking at creating all- female versions of GND (GMJ).