

woman, performer, and shameless worshipper of beauty. Completely abandoning any desire to pass as a biological woman, Arsenault has instead embraced the extraordinary and unnatural; for example, she complicated the aestheticization of the female form by deciding to surgically remove her testicles while retaining her fully functional penis. Arsenault is a captivating artist whose work and ideas can appeal to students and scholars of many interests.

One need not be invested in physical/ sexual corporeality and transformation to appreciate the theatrical and performance aspects of Arsenault's work. Similarly, a reader interested in religious iconography and mythic symbolism will benefit from the essay on Arsenault's goddess affinities and embodiment of a death and resurrection narrative, even if they are not interested in theatre and performance, more broadly. *TRANS(per)FORMING* is the first book-length scholarly publication about Nina Arsenault, and the diversity of critical responses to her life and art testifies to the need for this book and the range of interests to which it appeals.

## NORMAND CHAURETTE

### *Comment tuer Shakespeare*

Montréal: Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2011. 224pp.

## LEANORE LIEBLEIN

Normand Charette's remarkable *Comment tuer Shakespeare* is an elusive and provocative book. It contains fiction, history, theory, translation, literary analysis, memoir, confession, and more, and it is this multiplicity that constitutes its richness. Taken together the chapters are a representation of the playwright/translator's love affair with an inexhaustible Shakespeare and the adventure of translating his work. Like all love affairs, it is passionate, volatile, and not untroubled. In Charette's account, the painful and exhilarating experience of translating Shakespeare is a journey of self-discovery and a paradoxical process of killing and creating.

The book is a masterpiece of indirection. Each chapter is titled "A Translation of [a work by Shakespeare]." But only some chapters are actually about Charette's experience of translating (or not) the work in question. "A Translation of *Macbeth*" is a work of fiction in which professional translator Bantcho Bantchevsky, assailed by the hordes of his fevered depression and

imagination, and overwhelmed by the love and criminality at the heart of the Macbeth's crime, commits suicide at a production of Verdi's *Macbeth*. "A Translation of *Twelfth Night*" recounts the story of Delia Bacon as a spurned Olivia. Only "A Translation of the First Twelve Sonnets" actually contains full translations.

Chaurette's relationship to Shakespeare is immediate, intimate, personal, and varied. Different plays present different points of entry, among them the context, the characters, the words, the dramatic structure, and the accumulating history of translation and interpretation. There is no formula. After completing more than ten translations of Shakespeare (the number depends on issues of definition, publication and performance), Chaurette still approaches each new translation afresh.

Initially Chaurette viewed translation as an individual undertaking at the center of which was the translating "I." Of this early period he writes, "[. . .] I would read Shakespeare for myself, the way a musician plays his scales, sometimes seriously, sometimes out of obligation" (85; all translations mine). His account of an aborted struggle to translate *Othello* in 1988 dramatizes his obsession with an Iago who eludes all his attempts at characterization. Chaurette came to Shakespeare through music before he came to the texts, and nowhere is this more evident than in his re-thinking of Iago with whose intractable darkness in Shakespeare he wrestles. Where the character is idealistic in Verdi, he is underhanded in Shakespeare (29). Part of Chaurette's challenge in translating *Othello* is to make his way back from Verdi to Shakespeare without being overwhelmed by a character who could become too one-sided: "More than once I felt that by his mockeries he sabotaged my work. That he sabotaged himself" (42). Chaurette tries to take refuge in Cassio, in Desdemona, but "Iago was my father, my friend, my brother and my lover. I just wanted [. . .] a bit of latitude. I found that he had too many arms, too many legs" (49), and ultimately, he lets him go. Richard III too, though different, proved similarly elusive and overwhelming, as he found himself "translating" not the words of Shakespeare's play but those the character spoke to him in his imagination (61). Six months of struggle produced two lines. But with his resentment of Richard emerged other voices of resentment, the voices of the queens, and the process whereby Chaurette created his magnificent play *Les Reines*.

If Chaurette's translating in the first section was carried out alone, his translating in the second was carried out in relation to *mise-en-scène*. For the first time, in 1991, he was asked profes-

sionally to translate a play by Shakespeare, and his first translation of *As You Like It* was experimental and playful: "I decided to translate the play word-for-word, keeping as close as possible to the original vocabulary" (86). This included retaining recurring English words and, where possible, the music of Shakespeare's language. Thus, for example, "*Full of tears, full of laughs*" was translated into "Foule de rires, foule de larmes." The result was a ludic translation, consistent with a *mise-en-scène* that emphasized physically the absurdity that reigned in the Forest of Arden. Two years later, when asked by director Alice Ronfard to re-translate the play, he scrutinized each word, each phrase focusing not only on their sound, but also on their sense. The book is dedicated to Alice, his "very very Rosalind," who pushed him to the honesty and transparency necessary to the task (104).

There followed, of course, many other translations, only a few of which, including *A Midsummer Night's Dream* and *Romeo and Juliet*, are discussed in the book in detail. "On est rarement seul quand on traduit Shakespeare" (80). The translator, it becomes clear, is part of a community—of other translators of course, but also, over time, of the tens of thousands of university professors, researchers, and specialists passionate about history, psychology, mythology, astrology, and psychoanalysis who have left us their knowledge of the Shakespeare canon. Not to mention composers, directors, actors, and scenographers (80, 81).

It is the final chapter, called "A Translation of *The Winter's Tale*" (which to my knowledge he has never translated), that offers the most personal overview of the author's relationship to Shakespeare. In it Chaurette admits that for a long time he thought that Shakespeare's love scenes were conventional, forced, and poorly written in comparison with scenes of unimaginable violence like Cornwall's attack on the eyes of Gloucester. However, it was in translating *King Lear* that he came to realize that, in spite of his fascination with the human cruelty, humiliation, and suffering in the plays, he wanted to translate, to kill, and to resuscitate Shakespeare precisely because it was in the love scenes that his own and Shakespeare's zones of discomfort most overlapped (203). Killing Shakespeare is the flip side of being killed by Shakespeare: "Et moi, me suis-je si souvent demandé, comment Shakespeare m'avait-il tué? By what play, what scene did he flay me to the point of sucking me, with so much vigor into his project?" (206). Where did a play make demands on Chaurette's own artistic integrity? What is the process whereby it becomes necessary to wrestle a work by Shakespeare to the ground in order

to make it live? And to allow oneself to live? *Comment tuer Shakespeare*, which reveals new gems on each rereading, offers fascinating insight into the works of Shakespeare, Chaurette's creative process, and the challenges of theatrical translation.

## HERVÉ GUAY

*L'éveil culturel – Théâtre et presse à Montréal, 1898-1914.*

Montréal : Les Presses de l'Université de Montréal, 2010, 350 pp.

## JEAN-MARC LARRUE

Issu d'une thèse de doctorat soutenue en 2005, l'essai *L'éveil culturel—Théâtre et presse à Montréal, 1898-1914* que Hervé Guay a publié aux Presses de l'Université de Montréal en 2010, se lit presque comme un roman, ce qui indique que cette mutation de la thèse vers l'essai, souvent hasardeuse, a ici parfaitement réussi. On apprécie la précision de l'information foisonnante et la langue élégante et fluide dans laquelle elle est livrée. L'étude de Guay porte sur la critique théâtrale à une période qui est souvent considérée comme un premier âge d'or du théâtre à Montréal, qu'il soit anglophone ou francophone (ou même yiddishophone). C'est effectivement à la toute fin du XIX<sup>e</sup> siècle qu'apparaissent les premiers théâtres professionnels francophones dans ce qui était alors la métropole du Canada. En quelques années, les scènes se multiplient en se diversifiant et se spécialisant. Le cinéma, dont le succès ira croissant, n'a pas encore délogé le théâtre en tant que divertissement préféré des Montréalais, toutes langues confondues. Cette domination effervescente dure jusqu'au déclenchement de la Première Guerre mondiale qui ne met pas un terme à cette pratique multiple et ouverte, mais qui la déstabilise, la ralentit et force son repositionnement. Hervé Guay est donc tout à fait légitimé de se centrer sur cette période relativement brève mais d'une remarquable richesse.

Cette étude est à la fois nécessaire et exemplaire. Nécessaire parce qu'elle aborde un domaine généralement délaissé par les historiens du théâtre en dépit de son importance : la critique théâtrale. Précisons-le, ce désintérêt ne concerne pas que la période en question, elle est généralisée. Il était donc plus que temps que quelqu'un se penche sur cette composante essentielle de l'institution théâtrale et que Bourdieu intégrait à l'instance de légitimation, capitale dans la logique de la distinction et tente, par une analyse minutieuse et approfondie, d'en révéler les mécanismes,