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《晚安戴絲德蒙娜（早安茱麗葉）》中互文式女性主義喜劇的賦加力量

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中文摘要： 在她1988年的《晚安戴絲德蒙娜（早安茱莉葉）》加拿大女劇作家安瑪麗·麥唐娜把莎士比亞的原料和她自己女性主義原創成分加在一起，混搭成一齣娛樂性高、機智伶俐、又具啟發性的戲劇。這齣戲混雜了女主角康絲坦·雷碧莉、戴絲德蒙娜和茱莉葉的故事。康絲坦是京司頓皇后大學的助理教授，因為迷戀同事克勞德·耐得教授而幫他捉刀寫學術論文十年了。然而戲一開始時，康絲坦卻跌到人生谷底，因為他告訴她她再也不需替他寫文章了，因為他剛剛升等為正教授，而且他還拿到牛津大學講師的工作。他打算和另外一位女學生雷蒙娜一起去那高就。康絲坦被此消息徹底擊潰，接著她卻經歷變形效果，先是穿越時空到了賽浦路斯來見戴絲德蒙娜，後是到了維隆那拜訪茱莉葉。康絲坦做研究時深信莎翁著名的《奧賽羅》和《羅密歐與茱莉葉》應該原來是喜劇的。接著在她胡亂幫助下，康絲坦竟然就了二位女主角的命，她自己也真正瞭解到生命對她的意義。本論文即要檢視在《晚安戴絲德蒙娜（早安茱莉葉）》中一位現代女學者的焦慮，本論文同時探究女性主義的解讀如何顛覆父權價值；另為，本論文也要分析伊莉莎白時期父權悲劇和現代女性主義重讀交互對話可以為今日女性產生新賦加能力。

中文關鍵詞： 莎士比亞，改寫，挪用，《晚安戴絲德蒙娜（早安茱莉葉）》，女性賦加能力

英文摘要： In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1988), female Canadian playwright Ann-Marie MacDonald mixes up Shakespearean source elements and her own feminist and original ingredients and cooks up a highly entertaining, witty, and enlightening hodgepodge of Desdemona's, Juliet's, and Constance Ledbelley's stories. Because of a crush on him, Constance, an Assistant Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, has been ghostly writing papers for Professor Claude Night for ten years. However, she reaches the nadir of her life at the onset of the play when he tells her that she does not need to write for him anymore because he has been made Professor that day and will take up a lecturing post at Oxford University. He plans to go there with another girl student Ramona. Vanquished by the blows, Constance experiences through warp effects several transportations first to

Cyprus to visit Desdemona and then to Verona to visit Juliet. It is Constance's belief in her research that Othello and Romeo and Juliet might have been meant to be comedies. In her meddling with the two heroines' lives, Constance manages to save their lives and also to understand who she is and what life truly signifies for her. This paper intends to examine the anxiety of a modern female academic, and to explore how a feminist reading can help subvert patriarchal values, and how such juxtaposition and dialogue between the Elizabethan patriarchal tragedies and modern feminist rereading and appropriation can bring forth empowerment for women today.

英文關鍵詞： Shakespeare, adaptation, appropriation, Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)

A Dialogue with Shakespeare: Anxiety and Gender
in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Tsui-fen Jiang

I. Introduction

In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1988), female Canadian playwright Ann-Marie MacDonald mixes up Shakespearean source elements and her own feminist and original ingredients and cooks up a highly entertaining, witty, and enlightening hodgepodge of Desdemona's, Juliet's, and Constance Ledbelly's stories. Because of a crush on him, Constance, an Assistant Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, has been ghost writing papers for Professor Claude Night for ten years. However, she reaches the nadir of her life at the onset of the play when he tells her that she does not need to write for him anymore because he has made Professor that day and will take up a lecturing post at Oxford University. He plans to go there with another girl student Ramona. Vanquished by the blows, Constance experiences through warp effects some transportations first to Cyprus to visit the Desdemona in *Othello* and then to Verona to visit the Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is Constance's belief in her research that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* might have been meant to be comedies. In her meddling with the two heroines' lives, Constance manages to save their lives and also to understand who she is and what life truly signifies for her.

Although several critics have worked on this play from the perspectives of gender, parody, and comedy, there is still a lack of in-depth analysis of anxiety over the issue of gender lurking beneath the hilarious plot arrangement in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*. This paper intends to examine the dialogue between Ann-Marie MacDonald and William Shakespeare with an emphasis on the topics of anxiety of a modern female Shakespeare academic; moreover, this paper also explores how a feminist reading can help subvert patriarchal values, and how such juxtaposition and dialogue between the Elizabethan patriarchal tragedies and modern feminist rereading and appropriation can bring forth empowerment for women today.

II. Anxiety

A pervading sense of anxiety runs through *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* due to the frustration and uncertainty women have had for the past two hundred years. After Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792, women have witnessed and experienced many breakthroughs in demanding their equal rights from their male counterparts to bodily autonomy, to

education, to work, to equal wages, to vote, etc.¹ Women have come a long way and have obtained many rights newly granted to them and the accompanying setbacks physically and mentally. They are anxious about how to use and enjoy the new rights and entitlements and, more importantly, how to deal with the new gender role when confronting men and competing with them. Constance Ledbelly in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is such a woman who is trapped between her old gender role to be a submissive woman and her new gender role to explore her potential, to embrace herself, and to be herself.

At the beginning of the play, Constance manifests originality in her research potential but meanwhile she succumbs herself to Professor Claude Night because she dreams to secure his love for her. She finds “seeds of corruption and comedy” in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* because “[i]n both plays, the tragic characters, particularly Romeo and Othello, have abundant opportunity to save themselves” (8).² In the case of *Othello*, Constance finds that by the end of the handkerchief scene one feels irritated because of the suspicion that the tragedy could possibly be set to rights (11). As to the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, she can’t help asking, “Or is it comedy gone awry, when a host of comic devices is pressed into the blood-soaked service of tragic ends?” (13). Hence, she boldly postulates, “Indeed, in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* the Fool is conspicuous by his very absence, for these two tragedies turn on flimsy mistakes – a lost hanky, a delayed wedding announcement – mistakes too easily concocted and corrected by a Wise Fool” (14). She suspects there is a missing Fool “whom Shakespeare eliminated from two earlier comedies by an unknown author” and she is hoping to decode the “Gustav Manuscript,” vowing to “prove the prior existence of two comedies by an unknown author” (15).

Although Constance has been working studiously on this research, she keeps putting off finishing her dissertation; instead, she has been ghostwriting for Professor Claude Night for ten years. Because he is busy, Constance writes an essay for him to attack Professor Hollowfern’s book; and because he is busy, she writes the speech draft for his speech at the Literary Society. Constance works hard for him, but Professor Claude Night only regards her as a “laughing stock” and her theory to him reveals merely “such an interesting little mind” (17).

Constance proves to be more critical, original, and dynamic in comparison with Professor Claude Night, but she is not assertive, confident, or outspoken. She has a

¹ Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military or be conscripted; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights. See Lockwood, Bert B. (ed.), *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2006).

² All citations to the play under consideration are to Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1990).

very different theory that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* were supposed to be comedies based on the clues and plot arrangements in the plays. However, facing four hundred years of Shakespeare studies dominated by male critics and scholars, she is not assertive in making such claims that go against the entire Shakespeare legacy because male academics, such as Professor Claude Night, simply take her postulation trivial and her mind small. Even famous theatre scholar such as Elaine Aston also indicates her fears in appropriating Shakespeare's plays (85);³ we can comprehend why Constance harbors fear and anxiety. Being slighted and marginalized, Constance naturally is anxious about her ability and her performance.

Even though, as an assistant professor, Constance might have a hunch that she is insightful about the comedy theory of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, she needs the mainly male-dominated academic to approve of her stance. Likewise, as a woman, Constance also needs care, boon, and love from Professor Claude Night to fulfill her female vanity and sexual desire. In both public and private life, Constance feels insecure. In spite of the fact that Constance has been studying in the Ph.D. program of English literature, and in spite of the fact that she is teaching at a university as an assistant professor, she still has great anxiety over herself. In her academic career, she "uses" Professor Claude Night's name to launch criticisms of her own, and she is afraid of speaking up her own theory of the missing Fool in the two tragedies. In her private emotional life, she enslaves herself to Professor Claude Night and awaits his return of love patiently. In sum, the anxiety over her educational achievement, professional performance, and emotional life renders Constance timid and submissive.

III. Desdemona's Agency, Juliet's Eroticism, and Constance's Theory of the Missing Wise Fool

Just as what Chorus says in "The Prologue" of the play, Constance is about to embark on an alchemy quest for her true self, "where mingling and unmingling opposites / transforms base metal into precious gold" (6). On this journey, which takes place soon after she is used and dumped by Professor Claude Night, she will learn to face herself and rebuild herself by exercising agency, liberating herself from her past juvenile crush, and approaching life as a Wise Fool. In this way, readers can also discover such feminist reading of the two tragedies can actually liberate themselves from patriarchal confinements.

Desdemona's Agency

³ In her book *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook*, Elaine Aston tells her intention to incorporate feminist resistant performance work, but she finds this "proved to be the most troublesome and anxious period of work for the book" because she doubts herself, asking herself, "[H]ow could I possibly write anything at all on *the canonical of canonicals*?" (85). She later concludes that "sharing such anxieties was a good place to begin resistant performance work" (85).

Constance does not dare to disagree with Professor Claude Night, nor does she dare to do things she likes, but by studying Desdemona and meeting her in her alchemy journey Constance learns from Desdemona courage and agency. As mentioned earlier, she finds new ideas from the Gustav Manuscript, which is very different from the traditional and authoritative Shakespearean scholars' view, but she keeps delaying publicizing her dissertation and at the same time she ghostwrites for Professor Claude Night, "using" his name to speak for herself. She seems to think herself inferior to her male counterpart scholars. (Her answer to Desdemona's questions, "Where be the Amazons?" is "In fact they're few and far between and often shoved to th' fringe" (30).) Even when she is in her office or when she faces her student, she lacks an assertive posture and air. She nibbles on Velveeta cheese (7) and drinks warm Coors Light beer like a thief in her office (10), and she even dares not scold her student who lies to her. She confesses that she is called "The Mouse" behind her back (30).

Learning about Constance's quest for the Fool and the Author and her situation in her world, Desdemona vows to help her and instructs her to slay Professor Claude Night; Desdemona's words and action greatly inspire Constance. Unlike the Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*, this Desdemona in MacDonald's play has more lines to say and also more actions to take. She not only follows the courageous Desdemona of Shakespeare's to marry Othello secretly and chooses to be with her husband instead of obeying her father, but she also demonstrates her warrior-like manner when she voices her respect for the Amazon fighters (30) and expresses her fondness of the fray (32). She outgrows her prototype by engaging in more combating acts. While Constance nearly vomits, Desdemona carries a severed Turks head with no fear. She addresses the head, "Villain!" and tosses the head off while Constance is about to faint (36). She teaches her to envision it as her worst foe and tells her to "[l]earn to kill" (32) and encourages her, "And we be women; not mice" (32).

Invoking Constance's recognition of her worth and her power of agency, Desdemona can be regarded as the awakening subconscious of independence and self-recognition within Constance, which gradually ameliorates Constance's anxiety and uncertainty over the nature of her power. While conversing about Constance's "foe," she enlightens her upon Professor Claude Night's exploitation and enslavement of her and instructs her to redeem herself from her sense of guilt over allowing the enslavement to happen. Learning that Constance has been writing articles for him for ten years, warlike Desdemona replies, "Ten years of ghostly writing for a thief? / Thy mind hath proved cornucopia / to slake the glutton, sloth, and he hath cooked / his stolen feast on thy Promethean heat" (36). Desdemona also comforts her when Constance blames herself for the accomplice of this enthrallment. Her angry

comments such as “Thou wast in thrall; / ten years an inky slave in paper chains!”, “He wears the laurel wreath that should be thine,” and “he usurped from thee...” (36), channel out the anger and injustice Constance must have felt over Professor Claude Night’s exploitation and betrayal. The immense resentment and suppression culminates in the advice of bellicose Desdemona—“Gird thou thy trembling loins, / and slay Professor Night!” (37). Inside Constance’s mind, there emerges a voice to sever herself from her past enthrallment by this patriarch.

With Desdemona’s warrior spirit and self-assertion greatly inspiring her, Constance learns to be confident of herself and to take actions to express herself. Hence, when asked by Desdemona about her life in Academe, she dares to challenge patriarchal scholars. She describes to this woman craving for hearing more stories of cannibals, that her academic world is “dog eat dog” and “scary” because “in a field like [hers] that’s so well trod, / you run the risk of contradicting men”(37). She has slaved for years in this field but she is labeled as a “crackpot” and treated as a laughingstock.” However, emulating Desdemona, she now stands up to fight such derision and disrespect by shouting, “But, Desdemona, now that I’ve met you, / I want to stand out in the field and cry, ‘Bullshit’” (37). Then these two women in sisterly bond cry together, “Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!!” (38). (Footnote: Desdemona finds herself misread and despised.) The remark that greatly empowers her is uttered by herself to Desdemona, “Othello should make you his lieutenant. / You’re capable of greatness, Desdemona” (38). It is at this moment that Constance begins to acknowledge that she is capable of greatness, too.

Juliet’s Eroticism

After gaining self-assertion from Desdemona, Constance confronts her emotional problem and learns to liberate herself from her juvenile crush on Professor Claude Night and to explore her erotic potential. Her encounter with Romeo and Juliet dawns upon her about her own immature infatuation with Professor Claude Night, and the new affairs with Romeo and Juliet assure her of her personal charm and open up the possibilities of her sexual life. After reading an incantation in Cyprus and being transported to Verona, Constance “falls” into the critical scene in *Romeo and Juliet* like *dues ex machine* to announce the wedding news of Romeo, which consequently prevents the tragedy from happening since none of Mercutio, Tybalt, Romeo, and Juliet is dead. However, to her surprise, both Romeo and Juliet fall in love with her, mistaking her as a Greek lad. Even when Constance tells Juliet that she is a woman, Juliet still insists on having an affair with her, claiming such homosexual love adventure even better (77). She invites Constance to have sex with her. Romeo and Juliet’s love is canonized because of its purity and strong passion; however, both young lovers in MacDonald’s play grow tired of each other the second day after their

wedding and quickly fall in love with others they encounter. Their juvenile love is depicted as fickle and immature.

Constance is disillusioned of her love of Professor Claude Night after her visit to this pair of newly wed teenagers. Professor Claude Night must be charming and charismatic so Constance would fall in love with him at first sight and willingly enslave herself to him for ten years. Such infatuation is immature and self denigrating; their relationship is not based on equal terms and true love. Seeing Romeo and Juliet acting in such an immature way, Constance sees the blindness of her infatuation of Professor Night and then begins to unfetter herself from her obsession. She realizes that she is a woman of charm and power (because both Romeo and Juliet would fall for her) and she deserves a better man or maybe a woman.

This erotic Juliet also embarks Constance on a journey of homoerotic quest by disarming her old gender concept of a passive woman in heterosexual love, and by offering respect and care to her despite her seniority (78-79). She urges her: "Be thou the mirror pool of my desire: reflect my love as thou dost ape my form" (78). This once the symbol of pure love enticingly invites her by saying, "And thus with every look and touch, entwine / my poor young thread into thy richer weave" (79). Constance's terse reply, "Okay," shows her astonishing transformation from an exploited and submissive woman to a free and radical woman. Though it is Juliet's highly volatile puppy love which helps liberate Constance from her servile infatuation with Professor Claude Night, it is also Juliet's sexually adventurous call that awakens Constance's dormant sexual inclinations. We know neither what will happen to their homoerotic love, nor how long this fickle Juliet would still be interested in Constance, but we do know that Constance has crossed the boundary of her gender vision and her old confined self on the path to fully understanding and embracing her true self. In other words, thanks to Juliet, many possibilities of life have been opened to Constance.

Constance's Theory of the Missing Wise Fool

With Desdemona's courage and agency, Juliet's willingness to accept possibilities, Constance only needs one more virtue to finish her journey of self-discovery, viz, the spirit of the wise fool. In fact, she found the secret to a happy life in her research on *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is the journey to Cyprus and Verona that proves her theory of the wise fool correct as well as beneficial to her own life. Her theory is that based on the Gustav Manuscript and the footprints of a missing Fool, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* were supposed to be two comedies by an unknown author; Shakespeare, however, later deleted the roles of the wise Fool and shaped both plays in the form of tragedy.

Constance's Shakespearean discovery highlights the importance of the Fool to

intercept into the tragic characters' rash acts. Constance's meddling with the tragic heroines' lives at the turning points alters all the characters' lives and timely rescues the two heroines. She finally discovers she is the Fool and her foolish act in life, though foolish, has the power to change. To become the wise Bard of her life, she has to do it, though her deed might appear to be foolish to others. Further, in face of setbacks in life she has to resort to laughter to diffuse the fatalistic and pessimistic problems.

A good example to manifest such power of laugh is Constance's unrhymed iambic pentameter tease (33). As the Chorus has instructed, "And in this merging of unconscious selves, here lies the mystic "marriage of true minds" (6). Constance now is able to mingle and unmingled three ingredients, agency, openness, and laughter together.

IV. The Female Empowerment from the Juxtaposition and Dialogue between Shakespeare's Tragedies and MacDonald's Comedy

Virginia Woolf laments there wasn't a great female playwright in the past and calls for Shakespeare's sisters to vie for some space for female writers in literary canon. It is not easy to uncover the writings by women in the past; what we can often do is to approach women in writings by men in patriarchal society. Nevertheless, Ann-Marie MacDonald's play juxtaposing between the Renaissance chronotope and modern chronotope is an illuminating dialogue between old and new, past and present.

To use a modern Chinese jargon, this play set in Othello's Cyprus and Romeo and Juliet's Verona with the frame story of Constance Ledbelly's love and career failures, is a *chuanyueju* (穿越劇 "traversing" drama, or "time travelling" drama), which means a modern protagonist travels back to a certain time in history. In such daring task to tamper with the master's plays, MacDonald rereads the canonical texts and foregrounds the obscure problems in these two tragedies—Desdemona's hidden warrior's spirit and Romeo and Juliet's pure but immature puppy love. She boldly inserts a Fool there to "reverse" the tragedies back to the comedies to express her discontents with the two plays: firstly, Desdemona's characterization change from warrior spirit to timidity in *Othello*; secondly, Juliet's pure but superficial and untried love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

In the original *Othello* by Shakespeare, Desdemona first appears as a courageous woman who loves to listen to battling and adventurous stories and who bravely and publicly expresses her love to follow the Moore; however, she is turned into a passive and cowardly woman when she begs her husband not to kill her so soon (5.2). While the original Desdemona's incongruent characterization is problematized, Juliet's iconic symbol of purity is challenged. To MacDonald, Juliet's quick and

headstrong first love has been overlooked by the critics and audiences in the passed four hundred years. The playwright thus magnifies the subtext and confronts Shakespeare “the Author” and Shakespearean study legacy by assigning to the two heroines more lines and character development in her play. Thus, the spectators comprehend the incongruent characterization of Desdemona in *Othello* (from latently warlike inclination to passively submissive behavior), and meditate on the true essence of Romeo and Juliet’s impetuous but immature love; thus, the audience also perceive the strong influence of patriarchal values. A time traveler such as Constance Ledbelly thus clearly alters the fates of the victims of patriarchal society. This traversing trajectory serves as a censure on patriarchal institution and ideology and an illumination of the woman’s versatile possibilities in dealing with issues in life.

V. Conclusion

Constance Ledbelly learns to incorporate what she has researched into her life in a new and invigorating way. She acquires agency from Desdemona, openness from Juliet, and foolish comic outlook of life from herself. By facing her own problem, she can finally walk out of the biggest blow of her life—the self-denial as a result of Professor Claude Night’s betrayal after exploitation. Ann-Marie MacDonald, employing the new alchemy of traversing drama and transforming submissive Constance to a pliable and brave heroine, does succeed in instructing us on the power of comedy in our life and the significance of being a wise Fool. Perhaps Constance is not exactly like the unruly woman in Kathleen Rowe’s book *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*, her story certainly “points to new ways of thinking about visibility as power” (Rowe 11).

When commenting on female writers of comedy, Regina Barreca believes they know how to combine both traditional and new conventions. “While providing at least some of the distinguishing signs of comedy—exaggerated characters, use of puns or wordplay, absurd situations—women writers still manage to undercut the conventions they employ by shifting the very framing devices used as definition” (Barreca 5). Using such a dialogue between Shakespeare’s plays and modern feminist rewriting, MacDonald also offers an ingenious way to empower women today.

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A Dialogue with Shakespeare: Anxiety and Gender
in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)*

Tsui-fen Jiang

I. Introduction

In *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (1988), female Canadian playwright Ann-Marie MacDonald mixes up Shakespearean source elements and her own feminist and original ingredients and cooks up a highly entertaining, witty, and enlightening hodgepodge of Desdemona's, Juliet's, and Constance Ledbelly's stories. Because of a crush on him, Constance, an Assistant Professor at Queen's University, Kingston, has been ghost writing papers for Professor Claude Night for ten years. However, she reaches the nadir of her life at the onset of the play when he tells her that she does not need to write for him anymore because he has made Professor that day and will take up a lecturing post at Oxford University. He plans to go there with another girl student Ramona. Vanquished by the blows, Constance experiences through warp effects some transportations first to Cyprus to visit the Desdemona in *Othello* and then to Verona to visit the Juliet in *Romeo and Juliet*. It is Constance's belief in her research that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* might have been meant to be comedies. In her meddling with the two heroines' lives, Constance manages to save their lives and also to understand who she is and what life truly signifies for her.

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II. Anxiety

A pervading sense of anxiety runs through *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* due to the frustration and uncertainty women have had for the past two hundred years. After Mary Wollstonecraft's *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman* was published in 1792, women have witnessed and experienced many breakthroughs in demanding their equal rights from their male counterparts to bodily autonomy, to

education, to work, to equal wages, to vote, etc.¹ Women have come a long way and have obtained many rights newly granted to them and the accompanying setbacks physically and mentally. They are anxious about how to use and enjoy the new rights and entitlements and, more importantly, how to deal with the new gender role when confronting men and competing with them. Constance Ledbelly in *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* is such a woman who is trapped between her old gender role to be a submissive woman and her new gender role to explore her potential, to embrace herself, and to be herself.

At the beginning of the play, Constance manifests originality in her research potential but meanwhile she succumbs herself to Professor Claude Night because she dreams to secure his love for her. She finds “seeds of corruption and comedy” in *Romeo and Juliet* and *Othello* because “[i]n both plays, the tragic characters, particularly Romeo and Othello, have abundant opportunity to save themselves” (8).² In the case of *Othello*, Constance finds that by the end of the handkerchief scene one feels irritated because of the suspicion that the tragedy could possibly be set to rights (11). As to the case of *Romeo and Juliet*, she can’t help asking, “Or is it comedy gone awry, when a host of comic devices is pressed into the blood-soaked service of tragic ends?” (13). Hence, she boldly postulates, “Indeed, in *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* the Fool is conspicuous by his very absence, for these two tragedies turn on flimsy mistakes – a lost hanky, a delayed wedding announcement – mistakes too easily concocted and corrected by a Wise Fool” (14). She suspects there is a missing Fool “whom Shakespeare eliminated from two earlier comedies by an unknown author” and she is hoping to decode the “Gustav Manuscript,” vowing to “prove the prior existence of two comedies by an unknown author” (15).

Although Constance has been working studiously on this research, she keeps putting off finishing her dissertation; instead, she has been ghostwriting for Professor Claude Night for ten years. Because he is busy, Constance writes an essay for him to attack Professor Hollowfern’s book; and because he is busy, she writes the speech draft for his speech at the Literary Society. Constance works hard for him, but Professor Claude Night only regards her as a “laughing stock” and her theory to him reveals merely “such an interesting little mind” (17).

Constance proves to be more critical, original, and dynamic in comparison with Professor Claude Night, but she is not assertive, confident, or outspoken. She has a

¹ Issues commonly associated with notions of women's rights include, though are not limited to, the right: to bodily integrity and autonomy; to vote (suffrage); to hold public office; to work; to fair wages or equal pay; to own property; to education; to serve in the military or be conscripted; to enter into legal contracts; and to have marital, parental and religious rights. See Lockwood, Bert B. (ed.), *Women's Rights: A "Human Rights Quarterly" Reader* (Johns Hopkins UP, 2006).

² All citations to the play under consideration are to Ann-Marie MacDonald, *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* (Toronto: Vintage Canada, 1990).

very different theory that *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* were supposed to be comedies based on the clues and plot arrangements in the plays. However, facing four hundred years of Shakespeare studies dominated by male critics and scholars, she is not assertive in making such claims that go against the entire Shakespeare legacy because male academics, such as Professor Claude Night, simply take her postulation trivial and her mind small. Even famous theatre scholar such as Elaine Aston also indicates her fears in appropriating Shakespeare's plays (85);³ we can comprehend why Constance harbors fear and anxiety. Being slighted and marginalized, Constance naturally is anxious about her ability and her performance.

Even though, as an assistant professor, Constance might have a hunch that she is insightful about the comedy theory of *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, she needs the mainly male-dominated academic to approve of her stance. Likewise, as a woman, Constance also needs care, boon, and love from Professor Claude Night to fulfill her female vanity and sexual desire. In both public and private life, Constance feels insecure. In spite of the fact that Constance has been studying in the Ph.D. program of English literature, and in spite of the fact that she is teaching at a university as an assistant professor, she still has great anxiety over herself. In her academic career, she "uses" Professor Claude Night's name to launch criticisms of her own, and she is afraid of speaking up her own theory of the missing Fool in the two tragedies. In her private emotional life, she enslaves herself to Professor Claude Night and awaits his return of love patiently. In sum, the anxiety over her educational achievement, professional performance, and emotional life renders Constance timid and submissive.

III. Desdemona's Agency, Juliet's Eroticism, and Constance's Theory of the Missing Wise Fool

Just as what Chorus says in "The Prologue" of the play, Constance is about to embark on an alchemy quest for her true self, "where mingling and unmingling opposites / transforms base metal into precious gold" (6). On this journey, which takes place soon after she is used and dumped by Professor Claude Night, she will learn to face herself and rebuild herself by exercising agency, liberating herself from her past juvenile crush, and approaching life as a Wise Fool. In this way, readers can also discover such feminist reading of the two tragedies can actually liberate themselves from patriarchal confinements.

Desdemona's Agency

³ In her book *Feminist Theatre Practice: A Handbook*, Elaine Aston tells her intention to incorporate feminist resistant performance work, but she finds this "proved to be the most troublesome and anxious period of work for the book" because she doubts herself, asking herself, "[H]ow could I possibly write anything at all on *the canonical of canonicals*?" (85). She later concludes that "sharing such anxieties was a good place to begin resistant performance work" (85).

Constance does not dare to disagree with Professor Claude Night, nor does she dare to do things she likes, but by studying Desdemona and meeting her in her alchemy journey Constance learns from Desdemona courage and agency. As mentioned earlier, she finds new ideas from the Gustav Manuscript, which is very different from the traditional and authoritative Shakespearean scholars' view, but she keeps delaying publicizing her dissertation and at the same time she ghostwrites for Professor Claude Night, "using" his name to speak for herself. She seems to think herself inferior to her male counterpart scholars. (Her answer to Desdemona's questions, "Where be the Amazons?" is "In fact they're few and far between and often shoved to th' fringe" (30).) Even when she is in her office or when she faces her student, she lacks an assertive posture and air. She nibbles on Velveeta cheese (7) and drinks warm Coors Light beer like a thief in her office (10), and she even dares not scold her student who lies to her. She confesses that she is called "The Mouse" behind her back (30).

Learning about Constance's quest for the Fool and the Author and her situation in her world, Desdemona vows to help her and instructs her to slay Professor Claude Night; Desdemona's words and action greatly inspire Constance. Unlike the Desdemona in Shakespeare's *Othello*, this Desdemona in MacDonald's play has more lines to say and also more actions to take. She not only follows the courageous Desdemona of Shakespeare's to marry Othello secretly and chooses to be with her husband instead of obeying her father, but she also demonstrates her warrior-like manner when she voices her respect for the Amazon fighters (30) and expresses her fondness of the fray (32). She outgrows her prototype by engaging in more combating acts. While Constance nearly vomits, Desdemona carries a severed Turks head with no fear. She addresses the head, "Villain!" and tosses the head off while Constance is about to faint (36). She teaches her to envision it as her worst foe and tells her to "[l]earn to kill" (32) and encourages her, "And we be women; not mice" (32).

Invoking Constance's recognition of her worth and her power of agency, Desdemona can be regarded as the awakening subconscious of independence and self-recognition within Constance, which gradually ameliorates Constance's anxiety and uncertainty over the nature of her power. While conversing about Constance's "foe," she enlightens her upon Professor Claude Night's exploitation and enslavement of her and instructs her to redeem herself from her sense of guilt over allowing the enslavement to happen. Learning that Constance has been writing articles for him for ten years, warlike Desdemona replies, "Ten years of ghostly writing for a thief? / Thy mind hath proved cornucopia / to slake the glutton, sloth, and he hath cooked / his stolen feast on thy Promethean heat" (36). Desdemona also comforts her when Constance blames herself for the accomplice of this enthrallment. Her angry

comments such as “Thou wast in thrall; / ten years an inky slave in paper chains!”, “He wears the laurel wreath that should be thine,” and “he usurped from thee...” (36), channel out the anger and injustice Constance must have felt over Professor Claude Night’s exploitation and betrayal. The immense resentment and suppression culminates in the advice of bellicose Desdemona—“Gird thou thy trembling loins, / and slay Professor Night!” (37). Inside Constance’s mind, there emerges a voice to sever herself from her past enthrallment by this patriarch.

With Desdemona’s warrior spirit and self-assertion greatly inspiring her, Constance learns to be confident of herself and to take actions to express herself. Hence, when asked by Desdemona about her life in Academe, she dares to challenge patriarchal scholars. She describes to this woman craving for hearing more stories of cannibals, that her academic world is “dog eat dog” and “scary” because “in a field like [hers] that’s so well trod, / you run the risk of contradicting men”(37). She has slaved for years in this field but she is labeled as a “crackpot” and treated as a laughingstock.” However, emulating Desdemona, she now stands up to fight such derision and disrespect by shouting, “But, Desdemona, now that I’ve met you, / I want to stand out in the field and cry, ‘Bullshit’” (37). Then these two women in sisterly bond cry together, “Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!! Bullshit!!!” (38). (Footnote: Desdemona finds herself misread and despised.) The remark that greatly empowers her is uttered by herself to Desdemona, “Othello should make you his lieutenant. / You’re capable of greatness, Desdemona” (38). It is at this moment that Constance begins to acknowledge that she is capable of greatness, too.

Juliet’s Eroticism

After gaining self-assertion from Desdemona, Constance confronts her emotional problem and learns to liberate herself from her juvenile crush on Professor Claude Night and to explore her erotic potential. Her encounter with Romeo and Juliet dawns upon her about her own immature infatuation with Professor Claude Night, and the new affairs with Romeo and Juliet assure her of her personal charm and open up the possibilities of her sexual life. After reading an incantation in Cyprus and being transported to Verona, Constance “falls” into the critical scene in *Romeo and Juliet* like *dues ex machine* to announce the wedding news of Romeo, which consequently prevents the tragedy from happening since none of Mercutio, Tybalt, Romeo, and Juliet is dead. However, to her surprise, both Romeo and Juliet fall in love with her, mistaking her as a Greek lad. Even when Constance tells Juliet that she is a woman, Juliet still insists on having an affair with her, claiming such homosexual love adventure even better (77). She invites Constance to have sex with her. Romeo and Juliet’s love is canonized because of its purity and strong passion; however, both young lovers in MacDonald’s play grow tired of each other the second day after their

wedding and quickly fall in love with others they encounter. Their juvenile love is depicted as fickle and immature.

Constance is disillusioned of her love of Professor Claude Night after her visit to this pair of newly wed teenagers. Professor Claude Night must be charming and charismatic so Constance would fall in love with him at first sight and willingly enslave herself to him for ten years. Such infatuation is immature and self denigrating; their relationship is not based on equal terms and true love. Seeing Romeo and Juliet acting in such an immature way, Constance sees the blindness of her infatuation of Professor Night and then begins to unfetter herself from her obsession. She realizes that she is a woman of charm and power (because both Romeo and Juliet would fall for her) and she deserves a better man or maybe a woman.

This erotic Juliet also embarks Constance on a journey of homoerotic quest by disarming her old gender concept of a passive woman in heterosexual love, and by offering respect and care to her despite her seniority (78-79). She urges her: "Be thou the mirror pool of my desire: reflect my love as thou dost ape my form" (78). This once the symbol of pure love enticingly invites her by saying, "And thus with every look and touch, entwine / my poor young thread into thy richer weave" (79). Constance's terse reply, "Okay," shows her astonishing transformation from an exploited and submissive woman to a free and radical woman. Though it is Juliet's highly volatile puppy love which helps liberate Constance from her servile infatuation with Professor Claude Night, it is also Juliet's sexually adventurous call that awakens Constance's dormant sexual inclinations. We know neither what will happen to their homoerotic love, nor how long this fickle Juliet would still be interested in Constance, but we do know that Constance has crossed the boundary of her gender vision and her old confined self on the path to fully understanding and embracing her true self. In other words, thanks to Juliet, many possibilities of life have been opened to Constance.

Constance's Theory of the Missing Wise Fool

With Desdemona's courage and agency, Juliet's willingness to accept possibilities, Constance only needs one more virtue to finish her journey of self-discovery, viz, the spirit of the wise fool. In fact, she found the secret to a happy life in her research on *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet*, but it is the journey to Cyprus and Verona that proves her theory of the wise fool correct as well as beneficial to her own life. Her theory is that based on the Gustav Manuscript and the footprints of a missing Fool, *Othello* and *Romeo and Juliet* were supposed to be two comedies by an unknown author; Shakespeare, however, later deleted the roles of the wise Fool and shaped both plays in the form of tragedy.

Constance's Shakespearean discovery highlights the importance of the Fool to

intercept into the tragic characters' rash acts. Constance's meddling with the tragic heroines' lives at the turning points alters all the characters' lives and timely rescues the two heroines. She finally discovers she is the Fool and her foolish act in life, though foolish, has the power to change. To become the wise Bard of her life, she has to do it, though her deed might appear to be foolish to others. Further, in face of setbacks in life she has to resort to laughter to diffuse the fatalistic and pessimistic problems.

A good example to manifest such power of laugh is Constance's unrhymed iambic pentameter tease (33). As the Chorus has instructed, "And in this merging of unconscious selves, here lies the mystic "marriage of true minds" (6). Constance now is able to mingle and unmingled three ingredients, agency, openness, and laughter together.

IV. The Female Empowerment from the Juxtaposition and Dialogue between Shakespeare's Tragedies and MacDonald's Comedy

Virginia Woolf laments there wasn't a great female playwright in the past and calls for Shakespeare's sisters to vie for some space for female writers in literary canon. It is not easy to uncover the writings by women in the past; what we can often do is to approach women in writings by men in patriarchal society. Nevertheless, Ann-Marie MacDonald's play juxtaposing between the Renaissance chronotope and modern chronotope is an illuminating dialogue between old and new, past and present.

To use a modern Chinese jargon, this play set in Othello's Cyprus and Romeo and Juliet's Verona with the frame story of Constance Ledbelly's love and career failures, is a *chuanyueju* (穿越劇 "traversing" drama, or "time travelling" drama), which means a modern protagonist travels back to a certain time in history. In such daring task to tamper with the master's plays, MacDonald rereads the canonical texts and foregrounds the obscure problems in these two tragedies—Desdemona's hidden warrior's spirit and Romeo and Juliet's pure but immature puppy love. She boldly inserts a Fool there to "reverse" the tragedies back to the comedies to express her discontents with the two plays: firstly, Desdemona's characterization change from warrior spirit to timidity in *Othello*; secondly, Juliet's pure but superficial and untried love in *Romeo and Juliet*.

In the original *Othello* by Shakespeare, Desdemona first appears as a courageous woman who loves to listen to battling and adventurous stories and who bravely and publicly expresses her love to follow the Moore; however, she is turned into a passive and cowardly woman when she begs her husband not to kill her so soon (5.2). While the original Desdemona's incongruent characterization is problematized, Juliet's iconic symbol of purity is challenged. To MacDonald, Juliet's quick and

headstrong first love has been overlooked by the critics and audiences in the passed four hundred years. The playwright thus magnifies the subtext and confronts Shakespeare “the Author” and Shakespearean study legacy by assigning to the two heroines more lines and character development in her play. Thus, the spectators comprehend the incongruent characterization of Desdemona in *Othello* (from latently warlike inclination to passively submissive behavior), and meditate on the true essence of Romeo and Juliet’s impetuous but immature love; thus, the audience also perceive the strong influence of patriarchal values. A time traveler such as Constance Ledbelly thus clearly alters the fates of the victims of patriarchal society. This traversing trajectory serves as a censure on patriarchal institution and ideology and an illumination of the woman’s versatile possibilities in dealing with issues in life.

V. Conclusion

Constance Ledbelly learns to incorporate what she has researched into her life in a new and invigorating way. She acquires agency from Desdemona, openness from Juliet, and foolish comic outlook of life from herself. By facing her own problem, she can finally walk out of the biggest blow of her life—the self-denial as a result of Professor Claude Night’s betrayal after exploitation. Ann-Marie MacDonald, employing the new alchemy of traversing drama and transforming submissive Constance to a pliable and brave heroine, does succeed in instructing us on the power of comedy in our life and the significance of being a wise Fool. Perhaps Constance is not exactly like the unruly woman in Kathleen Rowe’s book *The Unruly Woman: Gender and the Genres of Laughter*, her story certainly “points to new ways of thinking about visibility as power” (Rowe 11).

When commenting on female writers of comedy, Regina Barreca believes they know how to combine both traditional and new conventions. “While providing at least some of the distinguishing signs of comedy—exaggerated characters, use of puns or wordplay, absurd situations—women writers still manage to undercut the conventions they employ by shifting the very framing devices used as definition” (Barreca 5). Using such a dialogue between Shakespeare’s plays and modern feminist rewriting, MacDonald also offers an ingenious way to empower women today.

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科技部補助計畫衍生研發成果推廣資料表

日期:2014/09/28

科技部補助計畫	計畫名稱: 《晚安戴絲德蒙娜 (早安茱麗葉) 》中互文式女性主義喜劇的賦加力量
	計畫主持人: 姜翠芬
	計畫編號: 102-2410-H-004-224- 學門領域: 戲劇及劇場
無研發成果推廣資料	

102 年度專題研究計畫研究成果彙整表

計畫主持人：姜翠芬		計畫編號：102-2410-H-004-224-					
計畫名稱：《晚安戴絲德蒙娜（早安茱麗葉）》中互文式女性主義喜劇的賦加力量							
成果項目		量化			單位	備註（質化說明：如數個計畫共同成果、成果列為該期刊之封面故事...等）	
		實際已達成數（被接受或已發表）	預期總達成數（含實際已達成數）	本計畫實際貢獻百分比			
國內	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	0	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%		
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力（本國籍）	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
博士後研究員		0	0	100%			
專任助理		0	0	100%			
國外	論文著作	期刊論文	0	0	100%	篇	
		研究報告/技術報告	0	0	100%		
		研討會論文	1	0	100%		
		專書	0	0	100%	章/本	
	專利	申請中件數	0	0	100%	件	
		已獲得件數	0	0	100%		
	技術移轉	件數	0	0	100%	件	
		權利金	0	0	100%	千元	
	參與計畫人力（外國籍）	碩士生	0	0	100%	人次	
		博士生	0	0	100%		
博士後研究員		0	0	100%			
專任助理		0	0	100%			

<p style="text-align: center;">其他成果</p> <p>(無法以量化表達之成果如辦理學術活動、獲得獎項、重要國際合作、研究成果國際影響力及其他協助產業技術發展之具體效益事項等，請以文字敘述填列。)</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">無</p>
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	成果項目	量化	名稱或內容性質簡述
科 教 處 計 畫 加 填 項 目	測驗工具(含質性與量性)	0	
	課程/模組	0	
	電腦及網路系統或工具	0	
	教材	0	
	舉辦之活動/競賽	0	
	研討會/工作坊	0	
	電子報、網站	0	
	計畫成果推廣之參與(閱聽)人數	0	

科技部補助專題研究計畫成果報告自評表

請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況、研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）、是否適合在學術期刊發表或申請專利、主要發現或其他有關價值等，作一綜合評估。

1. 請就研究內容與原計畫相符程度、達成預期目標情況作一綜合評估

達成目標

未達成目標（請說明，以 100 字為限）

實驗失敗

因故實驗中斷

其他原因

說明：

2. 研究成果在學術期刊發表或申請專利等情形：

論文： 已發表 未發表之文稿 撰寫中 無

專利： 已獲得 申請中 無

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其他：（以 100 字為限）

3. 請依學術成就、技術創新、社會影響等方面，評估研究成果之學術或應用價值（簡要敘述成果所代表之意義、價值、影響或進一步發展之可能性）（以 500 字為限）

本研究的文本有一特殊性，即用莎士比亞經典悲劇改寫為現代喜劇。本人使用女性主義和喜劇的理論來進一步闡述劇作家的改寫目的和藝術成就。在學術成就上而言，本研究有二點貢獻，第一，這種舊戲新寫的改編方式，使經典文學傳播更上一層樓；第二，莎士比亞的悲劇中女性角色向來不受重視，劇作家麥唐娜如今替這些幾乎被消音的悲劇女性角色翻案，給予這些女性人物更鮮活的生命。本研究可能產生的社會影響則是在論文以中文出版時給台灣學者和創作者的啟發。因為本齣戲劇的呈現方法正巧是時空穿越劇，與時下電視和電影其中一股潮流不謀而合。本人十分樂見英文系學生在研讀經典文學作品時可以以這種穿越形式，神遊於想像世界與文中人物或作者對話，或是台灣的文藝創作者亦可採取此方式穿越古今中外與文學世界中的人物展開對話，改寫經典，賦予經典新生命。本研究希望這樣的古今對話，可以讓（經典）文學活化，文本詮釋生命更豐富。