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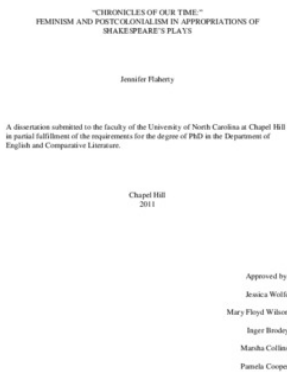
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"Chronicles of Our Time:" Feminism and Postcolonialism in Appropriations of Shakespeare's Plays

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Abstract

My dissertation argues that dramatic revisions of plays by Shakespeare address key theoretical debates in theatrical forums. My approach to Shakespeare's reception moves beyond reader response to writer response, suggesting that adaptations reveal the underlying possibilities and problems that resonate with successive generations as they read Shakespeare's plays. My primary focus is on the critical style of adaptation that emerged in the late twentieth century after playwrights such as Ionesco and Stoppard began appropriating Shakespeare. By making distinct alterations in iconic texts, these authors rely on an audience's foreknowledge of Shakespeare's plays to establish what I call 'creative dissonance:' identifiable changes that illustrate the author's social agenda. Just as postcolonial and feminist critics of Shakespeare focus on characters who have been marginalized by previous generations, these playwrights liberate marginalized characters from their texts and place them at the center of new dramas. Using feminist and postcolonial

criticism, I argue that authors who rewrite Shakespeare's female characters and Shakespeare's cultural 'others' (for example, Caliban, Othello, and Shylock) address and affect theories of biological and social difference. My first section examines the shifts in appropriations of Shakespeare's heroines that take place with the rise of feminist criticism of Shakespeare. I give particular attention to the transformations of Desdemona and Juliet in chapters on Ann-Marie MacDonald's *Goodnight Desdemona (Good Morning Juliet)* and Paula Vogel's *Desdemona: A Play about a Handkerchief*. In the second section, I examine the ways that changing concepts of otherness, as exemplified by postcolonial theory, have impacted revisions of characters such as Othello, Shylock, and Caliban. I devote two chapters to adaptations of *The Tempest*: Aimé Césaire's Caribbean *Une Tempête* and Raquel Carrió's Cuban *Otra Tempestad*. As a recognizable medium through which playwrights articulate their own social commentary, these plays function as key indicators of the ideals and biases of a particular cultural moment.

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