CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

CANONIZING THE RIGHTING

To pursue further the arguments in the introductory chapter, deconstructionists like Derrida have propounded the theory of dissemination, i.e., the way in which the meaning of a given word spreads or disperses resulting in the proliferation of meanings. Derrida stresses the undecidability of the text and the play of meanings. The present dissertation is an analysis of the ways in which ideology masks this infinite “play” of the text. We have already made a critique of how "ideology" acts as a restrictive force in the dissemination of the indefinite play of meaning in select Shakespearean adaptations. Any social order makes sure that its dominant ideology gets perpetuated. Education serves a prominent role in this, especially in the consolidation of capitalism and patriarchy. Most of the texts prescribed reinforce the gender stereotyping — women are portrayed as being passive and ineffectual. If they act at all, it turns out to be for destructive reasons. The impression that the text is to be regarded as coherent is frequently insisted upon. Louis Montrose's ideas on representation seem relevant here:
Representations of the world in written discourse are engaged in constructing the world, in shaping the modalities of social reality, and in accommodating their writers, performers, readers and audiences to multiple and shifting subject positions within the world they both construct and inhabit. Traditionally, ‘ideology’ has referred to the system of ideas, values, and beliefs common to any social group; in recent years, this vexed but indispensable term has in its most general sense come to be associated with the processes by which social subjects are formed, re-formed and enabled to perform as conscious agents in an apparently meaningful world. (778)

Critics claim that political criticism is getting prominence in Shakespeare studies. But the publication of a number of books and essays by Shakespeare scholars at “elite” institutions does not effect much change in the classroom and theaters where Shakespeare is widely consumed. The depoliticized and dehistoricized curriculum keeps on surviving. The possibilities of a creative political engagement with the plays get thwarted even after the introduction of the rewritten texts into the curriculum. This happens because the radical rightings of Shakespeare like Lear’s Daughters have not yet entered the syllabi. It is only the male
re-creations, which cater to the prevailing ideology, that become part of the canon. Shakespeare continues to be centred as the “cultural token”. Literary theory started exerting its sway in the field of higher education all over the world in the early 1980s. Theoretical collections like John Drakakis’s *Alternative Shakespeares*, Jonathan Dollimore and Alan Sinfield’s *Political Shakespeare*, Kate Chedgzoy’s *Shakespeare’s Queer Children*, Patricia Parker and Geoffrey Hartman’s *Shakespeare and the Question of Theory* etc. appeared in the 1980s and 1990s. As the titles reveal, all the collections concentrate on the plurality of Shakespeare by analyzing various modern re-workings of Shakespeare plays. Two decades after their appearance, they still encounter resistance.

In the field of Shakespearean criticism there is still a very strong opposition to applying theoretical criticism. The opponents criticise the attack on the “integrity and cultural authority of the paternal figure of Shakespeare”, which they believe exists. R.A. Foakes speaks in a belittling way about such theoretically oriented critics that they "seem to enjoy trashing Shakespeare, like school boys suddenly released from subservience to a formidable headmaster, and taking their revenge on him"(11). The acclaimed critic William Kerrigan claims *Hamlet* to be a play which does not yield to theory. He says:
Perhaps *Hamlet* is now a play object for contemporary critics. Their new methods and concerns give them no way to solve its mysteries and unravel its cruxes, so they paw at it, make gestures at it, and mount mischievous little runs on its margins to catch at least a bit of the crumbling old classic in their nets of intertextuality. But this, to my mind, is cowardice, and a cowardice that leaves the world less interesting. (4)

The more the stress on the multiplicity of the Shakespearean meaning, the more is the tendency to revert to the single "meaning". The case of the Shakespearean appropriations, too, is identical to this predicament of the theorists. The multitude of Shakespearean adapters claim, either explicitly or implicitly, that they alter the Shakespearean meaning. Ironically, it is an implicit acceptance of "one" meaning for the Shakespeare text. This is in fact the basic error in almost all re-creations: the error of ascribing a stability to the text that is challenged. Terence Hawkes comments on this problematic situation:

The notion that a 'reading' undertaken from a particular political or social point of view can transform a text which pre-exists that reading, nevertheless, contains a potential pitfall which it is important, finally, to confront. For it
involves the idea of an essential and ultimately unchanging text which lies behind all the different readings to which it may be subjected. (299)

As seen in our analysis, the feeling that is derived is that Shakespearean plays remain untrammelled by the negotiations made with them by the new writers. Each one tries to prove the validity of his/her approach by his/her reading of the text. But the ideology transmitted in the process is only a reinstatement of the ideology of the Shakespearean world.

The new writers endeavour to fragment the ostensibly coherent and conservative version of Shakespeare, who has been hegemonic in both the academy and the culture at large. The doubt about the success of their mission is vividly expressed by the South American writer Jorge Luis Borges. He imagines Shakespeare in conversation with God:

The story goes that before or after (Shakespeare) died, he found himself before God and he said: 'I who have been so many men in vain, want to be one man: myself'. The voice of God replied from a whirlwind: ‘Neither am I one self; I dreamed the world as you dreamed your work, my Shakespeare, and among the shapes of my dream are you who like me, are many, persons—and none’. (46-47)
Borges presents Shakespeare lamenting his status as both “many” and “none”. His attempt is to de-mythify and destabilize Shakespeare's glorified status in the literary repertoire. The new writers strive hard to assert the plurality and heterogeneity of Shakespeare. But one must admit that any re-enactment serves only as a powerful demonstration of the relevance of the past in the present day. Howard Felperin draws our attention to the existence and perpetuation of such a hegemony when he writes: "Self-consciously political critique of the canon is shown to collaborate unwittingly in its perpetuation and consolidation"(xiii). Judith Butler cautions: "The citing of the dominant norm does not (necessarily) displace that norm; rather it becomes the means by which that dominant norm is most painfully reiterated as the very desire and the performance of those it subjects" (133).

Shakespeare plays, Shakespearean criticism and education are often accused of being contributory to racism, militarism, imperialism, subjugation of gender etc. Alan Sinfield looks at Shakespearean plays as powerful stories that can shape culture. He says: “They contribute to the perpetual contest of stories that constitutes culture: its representations, and our critical accounts of them, reinforce or challenge prevailing notions of what the world is like, of how it might be” (1992, 821). Even when such an awareness is there, the Shakespeare industry reproduces in a
particularly potent form the bourgeois ideology of individualism, effacing the historical construction both of the text and the moment in which it is read. The spectators are offered no political analysis. The construction of individual subjectivity is accepted as already given. There has always been a noticeable gap between the new writers’ ability to recognize the role of power in the plays of Shakespeare and their ability to articulate the forms that power takes in the modern historical moment.

Like the new historicists the new writers question the notion of literature as the benevolent, kind teacher. They argue that literature, especially at the time of Shakespeare, was rather a loyal watchdog patrolling the fences of a conservative social order. John Brannigan's opinion may be brought in here: "Shakespeare was not the teacher of morals, but the guardian of the state. To show this is the case, new historicist critics have examined the ways in which Shakespeare's plays performed vital roles in support of state and church ideologies" (172). In fact new historicism emerged as a recognizable practice in 1980, when Stephen Greenblatt published *Renaissance Self-Fashioning* and Louis Montrose published his essay, "Eliza, Queene of Shepheardes", on state ideologies in Elizabethan pastoral forms. In spite of the currency of new historicism and their ideas, the task of historicizing and politicizing the teaching of particular texts still remains unfulfilled.
Derrida says: “Perhaps the desire to write is the desire to launch things that come back to you as much as possible. That is, it is the desire to perfect a program or a matrix having the greatest potential, variability, undecidability, plurivocality etcetera, so that each time something returns it will be as different as possible” (157-58). Though apparently this seems to be the case of Shakespearean rewritings, as theorists say every act of unmasking, critique and opposition uses the same tools it condemns and falls prey to the very practices it claims to expose. Thus the Shakespearean adaptations in effect do not question the ideology of the Shakespearean texts but only reiterate it and eventually get canonized. The re-creations of Shakespeare do raise issues of legitimacy, power and cultural hegemony. However, the various representations serve only to ratify the existing social order, by participating in a consensus which marginalizes or alienates any form of dissent from the social order. They police and bolster the authority of the social order much more effectively than any physical or military apparatus of the state. Texts, whether literary or otherwise, always present stories which are in favour of the dominant section of the society. Even the adaptations in changed times and climes have only catered to the dominant ideologies of that historical time and place. Any effort at radical revamp of ideologies that went into the production of the text and the various receptions at different points of time
has not produced the desired fruit. The possibility of undecidability proposed by the Shakespearean adapters remains an illusion. Their claims of radicalism are greatly exaggerated. They try to reject the dead hand of a self-satisfied and hypostasised ideology. But they cannot afford to ignore the institutionalisation and consecration of their own works. As a result, the rewritten texts themselves become doxa, the very state they set out to subvert. The crucial problem involved here is the new writers’ inability to be aware of their own position. Various cultural forces stand as obstacles in the way of the desire to achieve multiple meanings. Of these restrictions the most important are the notions attached to the author and authorship. The principle of the author allows only a limited set of acceptable works and ideas to flourish. Anonymous or collective writing, or works by those considered inconsequential, are ignored.

Contemporary theory often employs a strategic or political understanding of culture. Works of culture always engage with broad political concerns. Andrè Lefevere comments about the task of rewriting in general this way: “Works of literature exist to be made use of in one way or another.” (217). He continues: “Rewriting, then, in all its forms, can be seen as a weapon in the struggle for supremacy between various ideologies, various poetics. It should be analyzed and studied that way” (234). Any cultural work, including theatrical adaptation, has to be
studied in its minutest details to see the political issues involved in it. Re-
creations often attempt to recontextualize Shakespeare politically. The
cultural politics of rewriting can be properly understood only in relation to
politically significant notions like the author and the canon. Rewriting is
not a simple rejection of these norms, but rather an ongoing engagement
with them. In all forms of rewriting the attempt is to decentre
“Shakespeare, the author”. Fischlin and Fortier are of the opinion that
Shakespeare is adapted in large mainly because he is a major author, and
that if the author function were completely dead it would likely mean the
end of the kind of rewriting that is going on (6). Thus, in effect, there is an
ambivalent support for the author function, rather than the rejection of it.
This ambivalence happens to be there in the relation the rewritten works
that have been analyzed in the previous chapters entertain towards the
canon as well. Those re-creations which somehow function to reinforce
Shakespeare’s position in the canon get wide acceptance. The rewritings
of Shakespeare may be looked at as a kind of parody, with a paradox at its
heart. The drives of both conservative and revolutionary forces are
inherent in its nature. This parody surely has the potential of taking a
revolutionary position. But, unfortunately, it does not get explored most
of the time. The same is true of the already discussed re-creations also. An
attempt has been made to see how they function in the modern situation
and the effects that they have created on the literary politics of author and canon.

Unravelling the politics behind the canon formation becomes easy if a reference is made to the fate of the women’s theatre companies in Britain, mentioned earlier. Whenever there is a cut in the government funding, it will immediately affect the fringe theatre — such as women’s companies which are taken to be catering to “minority” interests. Around the year 1985, with the abolition of the Greater London Council, the WTG’s funding was terribly cut short. By the 1990s the company was in a great financial crisis and they planned various strategies for survival. Lizbeth Goodman comments on the situation:

It decided to attempt to ‘raise its profile’ by moving to new offices and designing a new logo, in order to attract sponsorship. The first plan was recognized, even at the time, as a difficult one to achieve since, in Clarke’s words, WTG is ‘not what the sponsors want to fund, and [WTG has] already tried numerous times to raise funds through sponsorship, without success’. (67)

What happens in effect is a lack of resources which acts as a restraining force on the number of staff and number of annual productions. This is the
working condition not just of WTG, but also of many other contemporary feminist theatres.

Late in the 1990s the members of WTG felt that the label of the feminist co-operative may not be a tenable one in the current economic climate. So they decided to change its name to “The National Women’s Theatre Company” so as to raise its public profile. Goodman remarks on this move: “The proposed name ‘The National Women’s Theatre Company’ would have been more likely to attract commercial sponsorship in the sense that it includes the keyword ‘national’, a word which seems to have nearly as much power as the word ‘royal’ in terms of attracting sponsorship” (68). This clearly reveals the politics behind marketing strategies. However, it is noteworthy that, though the WTG thought of such a conservative move, the final decision was against such a change of name. It was in this context that the company accepted the name “The Sphynx”, which was mentioned in Chapter IV of this study. Finally, one reaches the conclusion that in spite of various attempts on the part of marginalized sections in the society to come to the centre, the ideological framework that surrounds them remains highly constrictive.

As seen in the introductory chapter of this dissertation, Shakespearean rewritings can be equated with Post-theory. The nostalgia
for the established certainties continues to manifest itself in manifold forms. Mc Quillan and others explain Post-theory this way:

. . .[T]he ambiguities of 'post' point to both 'its temporal sense (where it signifies ‘coming after’) and its spatial sense (where it can mean ‘behind’). ‘Post-Theory’ must be a Theory which comes before and after itself . . . Post-Theory, then, is not just a Theory which is not present but is potentially so, rather it is a theory (an experience of thought) which cannot be fully activated even potentially. Post-Theory is a state of thinking which discovers itself in a constant state of deferral, a position of reflexivity and an experience of questioning which constantly displaces itself in the negotiation with the aporias of Theory. Post-Theory speaks to the other to whom it must be addressed. Even if the position of thought we are calling Post-Theory does not reach and leave its mark on its institutional other, it still makes its call, address takes place . . . The engagement with Theory is the experience of the endless promise. Post-Theory promises that 'Theory' will only take place when one can 'finally see sight'. In a certain sense then, 'Post-Theory' is a Theory 'yet to come'. (xv)
Similarly, the hope of rerighting Shakespeare is also in a constant state of deferral. The writers try not to re-enact old paradigms though they may be comforting and familiar. The impression one gets is that a radical alteration is “yet to come”. Nicholas Royle says: “‘Post-Theory’: this compound ghost gives me a feeling of déja vu. I want to emphasise that this is a feeling, in the same way as Jacques Derrida insists on the feeling he has about Marx and ghosts in “Spectres of Marx”: as he puts it, ‘everyone reads, acts, writes with his or her ghosts’” (3). Royle continues:

At first sight (if that phrase remains available to us), ‘post-theory' may look like the opposite of déja vu; it suggests something quite new, in contradiction to the past and already familiar. But it can also be said that 'post' and 'déjà' share a signalling towards the past, while (as their etymologies would indicate) 'theory' and 'vu' both concern the experience of seeing, a relation between structure and vision, a question of the spectacle and even the spectral. One might say in fact that there is a sort of doubling-up, a diplopia or déja vu effect inscribed within the term 'post-theory', in that the compound is a kind of compound ghost simultaneously designating what is still theory but at the same time post theory, what is at once post-theoretical and post-post-theoretical. (4)
The re-creations of Shakespeare also serve to create an effect of diplopia similar to that in Post-theory.

Re-reading and interpreting Shakespeare involves a *déjà vu*. An explanation of the term *déjà vu* seems necessary here. *Déjà vu* may be considered a sort of primal word or phrase, one that carries an antithetical or contradictory sense within it. An element of verbal duplicity is involved in it; a kind of doubling-up or diplopia. Shakespearean adaptations in fact render a *déjà vu* experience, a kind of doubling up. The Shakespearean world gets established recurrently through ages. Looking at the situation in this manner, this dissertation itself may be viewed as a *déjà vu*. *Déjà vu* and "post-theory" are concepts which unsettle the "first-time" of an experience. Modern writers try to tamper with Shakespeare with the express intention of creating something "new" for the audience. But whatever they do, the effect is a feeling that everything is already said and discussed. Rewriting Shakespeare is a kind of an "uncanny" experience for the writers as well as for the readers. On the one hand the writers have an illusion that they are unsettling Shakespeare. Belsey comments on this aspiration of the writers:

In Freud's account, the uncanny is what ought to have remained hidden but has come to light. The *Unheimliche* is the unhomely but familiar secret, which has become unsecret
and is experienced as unfamiliar: it is, in other words, the return of the repressed. Literature, in Bloom's account, offers us a sense of the strangeness of the familiar, or of familiarity with what is strange. It invites us to confront what might or should have remained hidden, to encounter a secret which is otherwise repressed. (133)

On the other hand, the new writers go back to Shakespeare under another nostalgic illusion, that Shakespeare is a safe area, the work on which can highlight their own position. This nostalgia has its base on the gap between what we lack and what we desire. The writers manifest an intense longing for certain qualities and attributes which they think they have apparently lost. They also find themselves incapable of producing parallel qualities and attributes which are satisfactory for the present day. Bennett says:

In fact, in all of its manifestations, nostalgia is, in its praxis, conservative (in at least two senses — its political alignment and its motive to keep things intact and unchanged): it leans on an imagined and imaginary past which is more and better than the present and for which the carrier of the nostalgia, in a defective and diminished present, in some way or other longs. This dynamic of the good past/bad present is, as Fred
Davis points out, nostalgia’s ‘distinctive rhetorical signature’. (5)

Freud, who had been marginalized in Theory, has reclaimed his position in Post-theory. According to Freud every individual craves for the safety of intra-uterine condition. The familiarity of Shakespeare is the familiarity of the intra-uterine existence. Even when the writers question the Shakespearean meaning as uncanny, as unfamiliar, the feeling created is one of familiarity. The readers feel that they have known this all the time. In “The ‘Uncanny’ ”, Freud writes:

It often happens that neurotic men declare that they feel there is something uncanny about the female genital organs. This unheimliche place, however, is the entrance to the former Heim [home] of all human beings, to the place where each one of us lived once upon a time and in the beginning . . . [W]henever a man dreams of a place or a country and says to himself, while he is still dreaming (und wenn der Traumer von einer Orlichkeit oder Landschaft noch im Traume denkt): 'this place is familiar to me, I've been here before', we may interpret the place as being his mother's genitals or body. (368)
Men think in vain that the possibility of creating alternative realities is a feasible one. This mode of thought is being surmounted these days. The new beliefs also do not give any kind of surety. At the same time the old ones still exist within every one ready to seize our attention. Freud remarks: "As soon as something actually happens in our lives which seems to confirm the old, discarded beliefs, we get a feeling of the uncanny..." (370-1).

Shakespeare is a comfort zone for any subsequent writer. Shakespeare seems to offer the modern writers the possibility of reviving an authentic, naturally better and material past. This generates a paradoxical situation as far as Shakespearean re-creations are concerned. This is surely an ideologically turbulent and problematic field which cannot be analyzed in an easy way. Shakespeare is at the centre of this ideological contestation. On the one hand the modern writers feel safe while engaging with Shakespeare. But at the same time, as Bloom has stated, they are highly anxious about the influence exerted upon them by Shakespeare. They try hard to break this link by subverting him. It is ironical that in order to disengage from Shakespeare, in actuality, they are mingling more and more with him. They face the complicated task of confronting the unheimliche, the stranger who is already within. Freud says that sometimes there are situations when we get the strange feeling of
having had the same experience once before or having been in the same place once before. Though we try sincerely to recollect the previous occasion, we will not succeed either. The feeling of *déjà vu* under our consideration involves a recollection of the unconscious ideological world of Shakespeare. Nicholas Royle illustrates an observation about *déjà vu* made by Fouillele and discussed by Havelock Ellis:

> [P]aramnesia or *déjà vu* is a 'kind of diplopia or seeing double in the mental field': the feeling of *déjà vu* involves 'the impression that the present reality has a double. *Déjà vu* is the experience of the double par excellence: it is the experience of experience as double. There can be no uncanny, perhaps, without some experience of this duplicity.

(15)

In the opinion of Fischlin and Fortier, Shakespeare assumes a colossal position through the rewritings. When Shakespeare is being rewritten all over the world, it is the myth of the colossal Shakespeare that is at work. Fichlin and Fortier’s comment may be of relevance here:

> The Shakespeare industry, all those elements of economic and cultural production that support and profit from traffic in virtual Shakespeares, has a powerful investment in Shakespeare's continuing presence, itself a function of
methodologies of recuperation, authenticity, reproduction, and, perhaps least evidently, adaptation. . . . In this formulation, the value of the Shakespearean commodity comes of a presence that graces, by association, the cultural artefacts produced in Shakespeare's wake. A Shakespearean commodity, therefore, carries not only its inherent value as a work in its own right but also the value significantly redoubled through association with the massive expenditure of energy and labour in the name of the Shakespeare biz. (16)

What one must recognize is the fact that Shakespeare himself has no fixity as claimed by many. The attempts of the new writers must be given credit. But the resulting situation is still far from the ideal. The ones who rewrite are also products of the ideological background in which they write. Quite unawares, they proliferate the same ideology indefinitely. The mask of ideology never gets torn. It makes its survival possible in very covert ways. Literature can never be considered cyclic. Even when we accept this argument, what we confront in actuality is the duplicity or rather the cyclicity of literature which serves to represent a particular ideology in multitudinous forms. Though the multitude of Shakespearean adaptations undoubtedly help to disrupt the superior status of the Shakespeare canon, the increasing emphasis given to the
appropriations serves simultaneously to produce a still monolithic version of Shakespeare. Of course no fixed Shakespearean meaning is there to be reconfigured. But through repeated challenges it gets asserted that there is one such. Shakespeare has not yet been analysed in a truly “political” way. The adapters are all aware of the necessity of disconcealing the political agenda which informs the fabrication of Shakespearean culture. They try to reformulate Shakespeare in heterogeneous ways. They attempt to dismantle the notion of textual unity ascribed to Shakespeare but most often end up only in doubling back upon themselves, thus undermining the exploitative power relations which they seek to expose. The old power structures get reiterated, which prevents the formation of more potent forms of consciousness. For instance, Kaliyattam could have tried to underline the importance of considering a dominant alien culture within the parameters of its own historical and cultural specificity. On the contrary, it tries to familiarize the alien culture in the Kerala context. Also, the mainstream conservatism keeps dissident appropriations like Lear's Daughters always in the margins. Critics like Alan Sinfield have repeatedly emphasized the possibilities of subversion involved in any culture: “The opportunity for such a reading arises precisely because the dominant culture is heterogeneous in its make up, and so must also accommodate a vulnerable awareness of the disruptive potential of the
various layers and interests of its own intricate structuration” (1992, 45-46). Despite this awareness, the re-creations only serve to ignore the possibility. Bulman comments that it is not in fact a particular text which is the canon but it is actually the text's received readings which normalize the text as a cultural icon. He adds: “Despite Roland Barthes’s announcement of 'The Death of the Author' nearly 30 years ago, the Author remains alive . . . It’s odd that Shakespeare-the Author emerges in more conventional ways in stage oriented studies. This 'author' does not emerge simply or unproblematically” (12). Susan Bennett attributes this phenomenon to the orthodoxy of the theatre:

Theatre is, anyway, generally and rightly regarded as a conservative art form, and the devotion to Shakespeare a manifestation of that inherent conservatism. Yet the plethora of 'vandalized' Shakespeares suggest that their producers, at least, fantasize the possibility of the new. By performing (including writing) a text which in some or other way makes reference to an already existing (thereby value-laden) text, the production and reception of the 'new' text necessarily become bound to the tradition that encompasses and promotes the old. In short, is containment an inevitable effect of re-articulating the past? Or can a new text, by way
of dislocating and contradicting the authority of tradition, produce a 'transgressive knowledge' which would disarticulate the terms under which tradition gains its authority? (12)

Bennett thus argues that the Shakespeare revolution is really a covert operation, “a restoration” in disguise.

Alan Sinfield draws our attention to the failure of the righting mission of the writers:

Brecht in *Coriolanus*, Edward Bond in *Lear* (1971), Arnold Wesker in *The Merchant* (1976), Tom Stoppard in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (1966) and Charles Marowitz in a series of adaptations have appropriated aspects of the plays for a different politics (not always a progressive politics). Even here, it is possible that the new play will still, by its self-conscious irreverence, point back towards Shakespeare as the profound and inclusive originator in whose margins we can doodle only parasitic follies. (1995, 203)

Even when the adapters know the subversive potentials of Shakespearean plays, their readings almost always demonstrate the triumph of containment. Despite the presence of internal conflict, society and its
representations are organized down to their smallest details for the benefit of those in power. While discussing the need for a change in the English Literature curriculum in India, Ania Loomba comments that the attempt to re-interpret the Western text in a way that makes it “more meaningful” is simply to entrench it further into our education, and that we need to throw out the book instead of appropriating it. Identical is the case of Shakespeare texts. They have been consciously pushed out of syllabi, but are constantly replaced by their own reworkings thereby investing Shakespeare with an unquestionable canonicity. Thus the common selling device appears to be to take an innovatory approach to the classical text and, at the same time, make sure that the performance of the innovation remains within the limits of tradition.

Subjectivity and reality-constructing discourses and genres are constantly remade, rewritten and recontextualised by differently positioned writers and readers across a range of genres produced in a diversity of institutional sites and in relation to complex networks of knowledges and reading and writing practices. And yet, with all that rewriting going on, the same otherness, the same differences, the same marginalities go on being reproduced as they are challenged and made differently. De Certeau says, “Our society has become a recited society, in three senses: it is defined by stories . . . , by citations of stories, and by the
interminable recitation of stories” (1984, 186). In conclusion, one finds that there are limits to what can be said and written and even meant at a given point in time. Belsey’s assessment of the role of literature in the construction of the subject may be of relevance here:

It is because subjectivity is perpetually in process that literary texts can have an important function. No one, I think, would suggest that literature alone could precipitate a crisis in the social formation. None the less, if we accept Lacan’s analysis of the importance of language in the construction of the subject, it becomes apparent that literature as one of the most persuasive uses of language may have an important influence on the ways in which people grasp themselves and their relation to the real relations in which they live. The interpellation of the reader in the literary text could be argued to have a role in reinforcing the concepts of the world and of subjectivity which ensure that people ‘work by themselves’

the social formation. (1980, 66)

Such discourses produce the objects of which they speak and simultaneously exclude those categories which cannot be accounted for within the established “subjectivities”. The subjectivity evolved in this
study is a socially and historically produced subject who acts and produces meanings and readings. S/he writes and is simultaneously written in a structured space.

A dissertation of the present form, too, can play some role in canon formation. It too is capable of contributing to the standardization of certain texts. This is just an attempt at analyzing some of the images that emerge from adaptations of the Shakespearean page. One must admit definitely that whatever the number of images be, they almost always fail to contain their source and its continuing flow. The metaphorology of the coin employed in *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* may be applied to the righting of the Shakespeare canon also. Just like the repeated tossing of the coin, endless attempts are made to alter the Shakespearean texts. When rewritten, the new work should debunk the original text at least in its manifold homogenising. But like Stoppard's coin tossing project, the head alone making its appearance again and again interminably and quite shockingly, what one finds in the Shakespeare industry is the canon itself making its position stronger and stronger. Marginal characters including decentred women never come into the focus. Also, the male readers are constructed to view femininity in a particular sense alone. Thus the construction of the subjugated subjectivity of women goes on "ad infinitum". If the probability of the
tail's appearance becomes a reality, then only can the peripheral characters have any chance of gaining recognition. By picturising a consecutive run of ninety-two heads, Stoppard seems to be emphasizing forcefully that power is central. In Act II of Stoppard's play, commenting on their own mission Guil says: "Wheels have been set in motion, and they have their own pace, to which we are . . . condemned. Each move is dictated by the previous one – that is the meaning of order" (44). The rewriters of Shakespeare also have a similar predicament. Shakespeare fascinates them, disturbs their dreams and makes them knock on the door with an attempt at siege. But they fall short of success.

In Act III of the play, bored of their predicament while in the boat, Guil gets angry with Ros: “Why don't you say something original! No wonder the whole thing is so stagnant! You don't take me up on anything. You just repeat it in a different order" (78). The mainstream adaptations of Shakespeare, which have been analyzed here, do not seem to have much in original either. Like Ros and Guil, these new writers also seem to move about in a world that is already determined for them. Their multiple re-visioning projects end up unifying and regulating what they attempt to disperse and loosen. Each rewritten canon constitutes a canon in miniature. Instead of creating an image of an indeterminate Shakespeare, they propagate the idea that Shakespeare is the determining
principle – the fixed and stable point to refer back to. The rewriters acknowledge the possibility of multiple versions and a plurality of meaning, but they end up by referring this multiplicity back always to the unifying figure of Shakespeare as the single source of the texts' polyvocality. The following observation aptly summarises the situation: "Every page is a paper mirror. You bend over it and look at yourself. Water likewise gives back our image; but what image has ever been able to hold the river?" (Jabes 66). The ongoing Shakespearean adaptations never come to an end, but they are not able to contain the river of textuality.