

Theatre and Transformation in Contemporary Canada

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In memory of Carole Corbeil

Theatre and Transformation in Contemporary Canada

"Having come to voice, what and whose language do you speak?

What or whose language speaks you?"

--Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle* (14)

Premises and positions

In "The Prospects of a Canadian Drama," an essay published in 1922, Vincent Massey writes, "In the theatrical world we are--as I am afraid in some other things--a province of New York" (53). For him, any change in this state of affairs "will only be gained by our own active concern with the process of education. We must create our public, and the instrument of its creation will be, of course, a new Canadian theatre" (53). Massey differentiates between the terms 'drama' and 'theatre' in his article: about the former, he writes (erroneously, as critics subsequently note¹), "The Canadian drama [. . .] at present represents perhaps no more than twelve or fifteen produced plays" (53); about 'theatre,' Massey intends "something more than the material equipment of stage and auditorium. I mean as well the company of actors and craftsmen [*sic*] that make the modern theatre community [. . .]" (53-54). Massey links the two terms in a logical conclusion: "If then we are to have a Canadian drama we must have a Canadian theatre in which to produce it" (55).

In the following essay, I foreground a differentiation that Massey occludes--namely, that 'Canadian theatre' differs from 'theatre in

Canada.' While this distinction may seem unremarkable, it has important ramifications. As Alan Filewod explains, "'Canada' is not merely the site of conflicting readings of the nation (as is the case with any country). The very phrase 'Canadian theatre' has for over a century carried an implicit value of anti-colonialism [. . .]" ("Between" 4). Filewod argues that generations of Canadians viewed imperialism--what he terms pride in the Empire of "Vaster Britain"--to be a "gesture of *anti-colonialism*" (4, original italics), citing patriotic pageants annually staged from 1887-1941 at the Canadian National Exhibition in Toronto as corroboration. For the audience that cheered these spectacles, "complicity in British imperialism was not evidence of colonial subservience but proof of post-colonial autonomy: the Empire was an arena in which Canada was recognized as a mature partner but whose difference was acknowledged" (Filewod, "Between" 4).

This essay considers the contexts and consequences of such anti-colonialism in relation to theatre in Canada, examining their significance during a specific historical period. Not coincidentally, it examines the way that imperialism ironically figures as an implicit "gesture" of anti-colonial value. Has theatre in Canada become 'Canadian theatre' and, if so, how? If 'Canada' is a conflicted site, is 'Canadian theatre' equally fraught? Is 'Canadian theatre' (still) implicitly anti-colonial and, if so, is it still implicitly imperialistic?

While these questions reintroduce topics that I addressed in the title essay of *Producing Marginality: Theatre and Criticism in Canada* (1990), they also signal a shift in my emphasis and approach. "Criticism and the Construction of Canadian Theatre," the subtitle of "Producing Marginality" identifies its focus on the critical reception and evaluation of Canadian theatre. In that analysis, I borrow a concept from Michel Foucault to propose that "It is the system of power relations, not the people who compose it, that ultimately must be interrogated [. . . for it] allows individual taste to determine the place of theatre in Canada--taste which ceases to be relative as it becomes established in relational networks" (*Producing* 130-131). In the following, I engage less with theatre criticism than with the cultural contexts that distinguish theatre as 'Canadian.' My focus turns from specific instances of production and reception to the 'discursive

formation' to which these instances contribute--the cultural priorities and predispositions of the "system of power relations" that theatre enacts and establishes in specific historical moments. Thus I further elaborate a second theoretical premise that "Producing Marginality" includes--namely, that "art both responds to and constructs social and historical conditions," that it, like criticism, "reveals and affects its context" (*Producing* 125).

This essay explores another more complicated premise as well, one that theorizes theatre in Canada as a dialogic institution that functions within and against culture to form and reform social value. I call this function 'transformation.' Although tropes of transformation figure prominently in Performance Studies, they appear less frequently in Theatre and Drama Studies. In *Performance Theory*, Richard Schechner suggests one reason for this when he distinguishes between "social" and "aesthetic" theatre. Performance Studies primarily focuses on the former category whose largely unscripted rituals such as ceremonies and pageants make them appear "more like a game or sporting contest" (Schechner 116) than a play. In contrast, Theatre and Drama Studies mainly consider the history and interpretation of events signified by Schechner's second term--performances such as scripted theatre that are "aesthetic" in that they are "almost entirely prearranged" (Schechner 116).

For my purposes here, 'theatre' signifies Schechner's "aesthetic" category, a form "less instrumental and more ornamental than social drama," one that uses "symbolic time and place and in doing so become[s] entirely fictionalized" (Schechner 116). For him, "The key difference between social and aesthetic dramas is the performance of the transformations effected" (171). Scholars discuss "social" theatre or drama in terms of transformation primarily because its performance both symbolizes and actualizes a change in the status of its participants. Whether "social" or "aesthetic," Schechner contends that theatre always "includes mechanisms for transformation" (170) which he details in *Performance Theory*:

Transformations in theater occur in three different places, and at three different levels: 1) in the drama, that is, in the story; 2)

in the performers whose special task it is to undergo a temporary *rearrangement* of their body/mind, what I call a "transportation" [. . .]; 3) in the audience where changes may either be temporary (entertainment) or permanent (ritual). (170, original italics)²

The 'third level' of Schechner's schema resonates most loudly in the following. Schechner observes that "In aesthetic drama everyone in the theater is a participant in the *performance* while only those playing roles in the drama are participants in the *drama* nested within the performance" (171, original italics). This leads him to a conclusion that is fundamental to my use of 'transformation': "The function of aesthetic drama is *to do for the consciousness of the audience what social drama does for its participants*: providing a place for, and means of, transformation" (171, original italics).

Throughout this essay, I figure "the consciousness of the [Canadian] audience" as a formation that undergoes transformation in relation to changes inside and out of the theatre. Stuart Hall suggests that in any transformation, what is seen as new or 'transformed' is "a reorganization of the elements of a cultural practice" (qtd in Grossberg 143). In themselves, the elements of theatre are not necessarily ideological; their organization and reorganization into various forms of performance, however, simultaneously perpetuate and effect changes that constitute ideological, if not political, positions. As Hall argues, "This ideology, which transforms a people's consciousness and awareness of themselves and their historical situation, although it explodes culturally, does not constitute itself *directly* as a social and political force" (qtd in Grossberg 144). Rather, it is symbolic, an enactment of the imaginary that impacts on the social by affecting notions of cultural value.

Hall proposes that culture "is not so much a set of *things*--novels and paintings or TV programmes and comics--as a process, a set of *practices*" ("Introduction" 2, original italics). His idea is central to Cultural Studies, an 'interdiscipline' that continues to gain credibility in Britain and North America as both a scholarly field and a critical practice. Because I rely on its basic tenets throughout this essay, I want to emphasize them at this point. Cultural Studies "resists the view of art

and life as autonomous experiences and insists, instead, that they are inextricably entangled in history" (Reinelt and Roach 10). According to Hall, "cultural transformation" is a primary focus of this emerging field, for culture, once it is viewed as a discursive formation, inevitably can be transformed: as a 'formation,' in other words, it enables its own 'transformation.'³ Hall considers that the metaphors of transformation that circulate in Cultural Studies must provide "ways of thinking about the relation between the social and symbolic domains" if they are to be politically useful. Indeed, he proposes that "This question of how to 'think', in a non-reductionist way, the relations between 'the social' and 'the symbolic', remains the paradigm question in cultural theory" ("For Allon" 287).

As a cultural practice, theatre facilitates the production and exchange of meanings between members of a society or group. This affords it considerable agency for it allows that "[Theatre] is not only the mirror through which a society can reflect upon itself--it also helps to shape the perceptions of that culture through the power of its imaging" (Wilkerson 239). Although this understanding remains marginal to Theatre and Drama Studies in Canada, a number of Canadian scholars contribute to its currency. Susan Bennett, for example, a professor at the University of Calgary, situates theatre audiences "at the nexus of production and reception" (vii) where theatre, as a form of representation, constructs imaginative and social realities. Her view, like mine, builds on Hall's conception of representation "as entering into the very constitution of things," as opposed to occurring "only after things have been fully formed and their meaning constituted" (Hall, "Introduction" 5). This distinction is important for, once imaginative and social 'realities' are viewed as representational constructions, they become open to change or transformation. Why? Because, as Hall explains, "It is us--in society, within human cultures--who make things mean, who signify. Meanings, consequently, will always change, from one culture or period to another" ("Work" 61)--and, he might add, from nation to nation.

Differences between imaginative and social realities mark Canada's history so persistently that they sometimes seem indelible. "From its beginnings, the Canadian state sought ways to legitimize itself as a nation even though it lacked what E. J. Hobsbawm calls 'protonational'

conditions: commonality of race, language or religion" (Filewod, "Between" 5-6). While this lack of homogeneity accounts for the regional, ethnic and linguistic differences that challenge Canadian federalism, it also effects the cultural diversity that makes Canada a prototype of the modern pluralist state. For Andrew Parker and the co-editors of *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, 'nationality,' because it forms in relation to something else, "is a relational term whose identity derives from its inherence in a system of differences" (5). Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick develops this idea in a provocative essay included in Parker's anthology: "it may be that there exists for nations, as for genders, simply no normal way to partake of the categorical definitiveness of the national, no single kind of 'other' of what a nation is to which all can by the same structuration be definitionally opposed" (241).

Sedgwick's linking of 'nation' with 'gender' may seem eccentric; it becomes reasonable, however, when each term is seen to signify socially constructed categories. The imagined realities of both gender and nation construct social circumstances, which though arbitrary and mutable, nevertheless regulate personal and cultural boundaries. Nationality, like gender, is realized both in institutional structures and embodied effects, each of which can be read (that is, decoded) as cultural texts. Sedgwick acknowledges the difficulty of decoding 'national' texts (what she calls "defamiliarizing and thereby rendering visible"), given that "one or another nationalism tends to become the form of last resort for every legitimizing political appeal" (238). Parker *et al* further explain this difficulty by identifying that "The nation's insatiable need for representational labor [supplements] its founding ambivalence, the lack of self-presence at its origin or in its essence" (5).

Although the questions about Canadian theatre that I pose throughout this essay might seem inhospitable to such theorization, they refigure many of the concerns current to the study of gender and sexuality. This obtains not just because 'Canada' is a socially constructed category but, more importantly, because the methods of its construction, like those of gender and sex, rely on "the discursive and institutional arrangements" (Sedgwick 239) of representation. Theatre in Canada is a discursive practice; more importantly, Canadian theatre is an "institutional arrangement" that has undergone a significant

transformation since it emerged as a cultural formation during the 1970s. My discussion of this formation proceeds from Hall's notion that "the scenarios of representation--subjectivity, identity, politics-- [have] a formative, not merely an expressive, place in the constitution of social and political life" ("New" 443). The "scenarios" of theatre in Canada demonstrate how 'Canadian theatre' functions as a "regime of representation" (Hall, "New" 443) that plays a formative role in the social and political life of the nation.

Tracing a trajectory of theatre in Canada

The comments on Canadian drama that Vincent Massey wrote in 1922 provide a touchstone for this essay. Primarily, they illuminate recommendations that Massey presented to the Canadian government in 1951 as Chair of a Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences. When the Commission convened its hearings in the late 1940s, arts and culture languished outside the 'public sector' of federal policy; nevertheless, their prospects for government funding had begun to attract support (Filewod, "National" 8-9). The *Massey Report* promoted these prospects, observing in the case of theatre that Canadian drama "has lagged far behind the other literary arts [. . .] because of our penury of theatrical companies." Indeed, the *Report* concludes that Canadian theatre can develop "if only federal subsidies could be secured for the erection of suitable playhouses throughout Canada" (qtd in Rubin, "Creeping" 320).⁴

Canadian theatre historians assert that federal funding for a national network of civic theatres during the 1950s and 1960s (Canada's so-called 'Regional Theatre System'⁵), as well as the Stratford Festival (founded in 1953) directly responded to recommendations of the *Massey Report*.⁶ They also consider that Canadian drama remained undeveloped in 1970 when the construction of most of Canada's Regional Theatres was completed. Although the Stratford Festival and some Regionals had produced Canadian plays by this time,⁷ most still programmed "the three Cs"—the Regionals' formula of contemporary plays from other countries, classics from the world repertoire and, nominally, a Canadian script, usually not new (Czarnecki 37). This

programming did more than frustrate Canadian artists who looked to the Regionals to develop and produce their work; it defeated the goal of Massey and his commissioners to build an audience for Canadian plays--a defeat that government funders noticed.

As early as 1962, the Canada Council reiterated the imperative of Massey's article and his Commission's *Report*: "the Canadian theatre demands Canadian playwrights" (qtd in Czarnecki 36). In a panel discussion held in 1982, Jean Roberts, the Council's first theatre officer, confirms that the Council "was very aware even in [the 1960s], about the need to encourage Canadian playwrights and it tried to do this mainly in those days through individual grants--the awards, the bursaries and the short term grants" (Association 172). In its *Annual Report* for 1966-67, the Canada Council notes that "The question still remains as to whether the regional theatres have been able to broaden in any fundamental way the outlook of their audiences" (22). Subsequently, it poses two questions about the nature of this "outlook" that are pertinent to my argument. The first of these asks, "If the interest of the audience has developed, can plays and productions meet their rising expectations?" (22). The query acknowledges that Canadian audiences were developing an interest in theatre by the mid-1960s--probably in direct proportion to the emergence of the Regionals; more significantly, it recognizes that "rising expectations" attend this interest. While the *Report* does not specify the nature of these expectations in 1967, its second question implicitly situates them in the cultural domain. The *Report* asks, "Can [the Regional Theatres] uncover new playwrights of quality and thus provide a social commentary on our own society?" (22).

The Council's two questions indicate that the distinction between 'theatre in Canada' and 'Canadian theatre' was more than academic in 1967. While Regional Theatres were developing 'theatre in Canada' with some success, they produced few plays that commented on "our own society"--which posed a problem not only for the Canada Council but also for the federal government whose public monies it distributed. By 1978, "the failure of the regional system to incarnate 'Canadian' theatre had become so apparent that the Council issued policy statements assigning 'priority to Canadian plays, Canadian artists, and

the employment of Canadians for senior artistic and administrative positions" (Czarnecki 43). Mark Czarnecki suggests a number of reasons for the failure of this policy, not the least of which is tighter financial measures that the Council announced in the same report (43). In 1982, a Federal Cultural Policy Review Committee would identify that the problem resulted from more than financial austerity or misguided theatrical practice:

Federal cultural policy has largely favoured physical plant and organizational development over artistic creativity and achievement. [. . .] What they add up to is more an industrial and employment policy than a cultural policy, properly understood. The bricks and mortar are necessary, but they are not the end product, the purpose of it all. (qtd in Czarnecki 36)

In *Second Stage*, Renate Usmiani chooses 1970 to mark the beginning of Canada's 'alternate' theatre movement. Arguably, this movement initiated the formation of 'Canadian theatre', as it subsequently became known--a cultural practice that would achieve the federal government's "purpose of it all" by determining for more than a decade the expectations of the audience for theatre in Canada. While a few companies that embraced the political and aesthetic values of the alternate theatres emerged before 1970,⁸ two events justify Usmiani's point of origin: that year, Toronto staged The First Underground Theatre Festival (FUT)--a landmark event in Canadian theatre history--and Tom Hendry, co-founder with John Hirsch of the Manitoba Theatre Centre (the prototype for Canada's Regional Theatres), introduced the term 'alternate' to describe the 'nationalistic' impulse that drove emerging companies to counter the Regionals' policies across the country.⁹ Most of these theatres developed for reasons that Ken Gass, founder of Toronto's Factory Theatre Lab in 1970 and its first artistic director, outlined in 1974:

[Founding the Factory] was a simple and arbitrary way of escaping the Canadian theatrical rut of following fashion.

Regional playhouses were (and, largely, still are) shaping their seasons to reflect the fashions of Broadway and the West End, and, young directors like myself in Studio or university companies were modelling our work after *Tulane Drama Review* descriptions of Off-Off-Broadway and Eastern Europe.
(7)

It is important that Gass, a graduate of UBC's department of theatre, indicts the training he received during the 1960s as much as the programming then current to Canada's Regionals. By 1970, Canada's few university theatre departments, along with the National Theatre School (which began in Montreal in 1960), still stressed European texts and methodologies; the French arm of the NTS even required the use of 'proper' Parisian French in its productions (Usmiani, "Alternate" 49). The Stratford Festival (which called itself the Stratford National Theatre of Canada when it toured) achieved wide profile by featuring productions of Shakespeare's plays, as did the Shaw Festival (founded in 1962) for producing work by Bernard Shaw and his contemporaries. The 'colonialism' of such practices frustrated Canada's emerging theatre artists who had fallen sway to the cultural nationalism articulated in the *Massey Report*. In "Creeping Towards a Culture," published in 1974, Don Rubin explains that "when Canada and, in particular Montreal [. . .] took upon its shoulders the burden of an international Exposition [in 1967], the seeds were sown for national introspection as well as for national extroversion." Rubin suggests that the celebrations of Canada's centennial year "set the political and social stage for the chauvinism which has thus far characterized Canadian life in the 70s" (323), an idea that most Canadian theatre scholars still endorse.¹⁰

Canada's Regional Theatres bore the brunt of the cultural chauvinism inscribed in the artistic aims of the theatre practitioners who emerged during the 1970s. As Filewod explains in *Collective Encounters*, "This attack on established theatre as colonial was fueled by the disproportionate number of British directors in the large theatres and the extreme caution and frequent scepticism with which they greeted Canadian plays" (viii). Commenting on this period in 1976, John Palmer, a playwright, director and co-founder with Martin Kinch and

Tom Hendry of Toronto Free Theatre in 1971, remarked, "We have embarked on nothing less than a fight for our own culture. I can think of nothing sadder than inaction. [. . .] We will produce well and badly, but we must produce" (qtd in Usmiani, "Alternate" 50). For artists of like mind, the Regional Theatres not only failed to offer opportunities for development but, more importantly, "were unwilling to risk any departure from forms of production tried and tested elsewhere" (Usmiani, "Alternate" 49), forms that privilege "the idea of a fixed, unchanging text which exists as a blueprint" for performance (Filewod, *Collective* x). An important consequence of their caution was the process of collective creation that many alternate theatres espoused as an alternative.

Filewod cites the hundreds of collectives produced at Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille and Saskatoon's 25th Street House under the guidance of Paul Thompson as examples of this process, creations in which "the actors transform their communal experiences in researching the material into an integral part of the performance text: the specifics of the material and the make-up of the collective account for the different forms and styles of the various plays" (Filewod, *Collective* 26).¹¹ By detailing the aesthetic principles common to these productions, Filewod inadvertently explains their difference from the Regionals' traditional presentations of single-author plays. Collective creations offer

a direct relationship between actor and material, an informal presentational style, an appeal to a collective sense of community, and emphasis on truth (whether actual or "mythic") which is formulated in terms of stories, and an implied reference to the process by which the play was made. This is manifested in the gesture of "showing" the image or fact to the audience. (*Collective* 27)

During the 1970s, Gass and his contemporaries developed a loyal audience for alternate theatres where forms such as collective creation both constructed and fulfilled new expectations of Canadian theatre. Their endeavour took its toll by the late Seventies, however, when he, like many of his colleagues, faced creative exhaustion and financial

ruin. To develop his company, Gass limited himself to new Canadian plays. In his own words, this practice forced many artists "to abandon the security blanket of our colonial upbringing. We found ourselves in a vacuum, without roots, and, indeed, without playwrights" (7). While Gass notes that "the plays soon surfaced" (7), they didn't necessarily serve the best needs of their theatres--an irony that many alternate artistic directors acknowledged as early as mid-decade. In 1976, for example, Martin Kinch wrote an article for *This Magazine* in which he attempted to explain how the dependence on new Canadian plays contributed to the artistic and financial crisis that many Canadian theatres had begun to face:

Theatres allowed themselves to announce entire seasons long before the announced plays were actually in existence. Panic-decisions were made to fill the holes when the promised works failed to appear. In the rush, and the acceptance of rigid opening-night dates, supposedly dictated by audience needs, many plays opened in the second draft, which should have opened in the fifth. ("Canadian" 6)

In an interview published in 1982, Kinch identifies other reasons for the crisis that eventually led him to abandon his theatre in 1977. Foremost is a change in federal social policy that cancelled make-work plans such as the Local Initiatives Programme (LIP) and Opportunities for Youth (OFY) that many alternate theatres had accessed for start-up funds. This collapse jeopardized the solvency of the majority of alternate theatres for whom the public subsidy afforded to the Regional Theatres by the Canada Council was not yet available. In the case of Kinch's Toronto Free Theatre where tickets were literally free, changing social policy "eroded the political basis of the theatre" (Kinch, "Interview" 343) by necessitating that the company charge admission. Kinch extrapolates the larger point which was increasingly clear to many of his fellow artistic directors by the late 1970s: "The idea of doing new plays and running a company in a situation that did not allow for a certain amount of financial flexibility was in opposition" ("Interview" 343).

This point also had become clear to the Canada Council. In the panel discussion held in 1982 to which I referred earlier, Jean Roberts met with the four other officers who had succeeded her in the theatre section to discuss their respective periods of service.¹² In a published transcript of the discussion, David Gardner, who followed Roberts in 1971 for one year, comments that the federal make-work plans pointed out "a great Council weakness--the lack of funding available to respond to new initiatives" (Association 176-177). He also identifies the more serious problem that OFY and LIP grants were assigned on a regional basis "with no real merit considerations at all"--which meant, he explains, "that while I struggled to scrape together a first seven thousand dollars operations grant for Tarragon and eleven thousand dollars in Lennoxville, the Sudbury Little Theatre was given \$90,000 to mount a single production and they were amateurs" (Association 176). The Council, Gardner opines, "was being upstaged and to the tune (I did a survey) of nearly 4 million dollars in terms of theatre, equal in fact to the Council's theatre budget" (Association 176).

David Peacock, Gardner's successor from 1972-78, inherited "the problems of LIP" which, he explains, "created a clientele which Council could not respond to adequately with the funds available" (Association 178). The cancellation of the LIP programme resulted in "companies going from \$90,000 from LIP to \$12,000 from Council for equivalent work and equivalent seasons" (Association 178-179). Nevertheless, the number of companies receiving operating grants from the Canada Council's theatre section increased from 49 in 1972-73, the year that Peacock began service, to 115 in 1977-78 when he finished; that same year, 32 additional companies received project funding. Primarily, this subsidy was facilitated by the growth of the theatre section's budget (the most lucrative expansion in its history) from \$4 million in 1972 to \$9.5 million in 1978. While this, in itself, is remarkable, even more noteworthy is the demand to which this growth responded. Walter Learning, David Peacock's successor, remarks that "The real demand in '78 when I went in was running around 12 million. That's what we needed at that time to respond, and I would say now that the real demand is running around 22 to 23 million [. . .] In terms of numbers of companies [. . .] there were about 115 when I started. Now there are,

depending on the day, anywhere from 160 to 170 and about God only knows how many waiting in the wings" (Association 185).¹³

Even though the theatre section of the Canada Council was unable to fully respond to the demand of Canadian theatre during the 1970s, it helped to finance the most prolific expansion of theatre in Canadian history. Unfortunately, increases to its budget soon would end. In 1987, Statistics Canada would document that "Between 1982-83 and 1986-87, the performing arts' share of all federal spending on culture remained almost constant. Its share of all provincial cultural spending declined by about three percentage points over the same period" (*Government* 38). This decline would continue well into the 1990s.

Theorizing the formation of Canadian theatre

The growth of Canadian theatre during the period framed by Vincent Massey's 1922 article and the 25th anniversary of the Canada Council in 1982 constitutes a significant cultural formation. To explain this growth in the following section, I invoke theories of literary production and reception developed by Hans Robert Jauss and Stanley Fish. Although Canadian theatre did not begin in 1922, Massey's publication that year illustrates that the ideology which would determine its construction already was in place. Moreover, it identifies Massey as an arts advocate whose influence on government attitudes would affect cultural policy for decades to come--a situation I examine in the next section. While Canadian theatre did not end in the early 1980s either, it began to fragment around that time--to transform in ways and for reasons that I address in the last section of this essay.

Theatre scholars sometimes cite 1967 as the year in which professional theatre began in Canada:¹⁴ not only were the Stratford and Shaw Festivals already flourishing by that year but also other companies such as the Crest Theatre in Toronto¹⁵ and Vancouver's Arts Club Theatre also were well established, as were many of the Regional Theatres. In Montreal, Le Théâtre de Quat'Sous was founded in 1964, as was Le Nouvelle Compagnie Théâtre. A brief note by Elaine Nardocchio about the work of Le NCT during the 1960s reconfirms that most of these theatres remained uninterested in Canadian theatre in

1967¹⁶: "[NCT's] repertoire of mostly foreign playwrights included Corneille, Shakespeare, Chekhov, Dostoyevsky and Steinbeck" (52).

On a more personal note, as a graduate student at UBC in 1967, I took a course in Canadian literature that did not include a play. When I queried the occlusion, my instructor proposed that Canadian plays were unavailable in print. His error indicates a cultural truth of the period: because Canadian plays rarely were produced, they infrequently were published. Although the practitioners of theatre in Canada had begun to create an audience, they had yet to "educate" a "public" for Canadian theatre. Or, to rephrase this in more theoretical terms, Canadian plays had yet to affect the 'horizon of expectations' of artists and audiences alike.

The approach to literary production and reception that Hans Robert Jauss proposes in "Literary History as a Challenge to Literary Theory" helps to explain the formation of Canadian theatre and its subsequent transformations. For Jauss, "a literary work is not an object that stands by itself and that offers the same view to each reader in each period" (21). A reader's reception of a text relies on "the objectifiable system of expectations that arises for each work in the historical moment of its appearance" (22), expectations that arise "from a pre-understanding of the genre, from the form and themes of already familiar works, and from the opposition between poetic and practical language" (22). Jauss explains that a "new" text does not emerge "in an informational vacuum, but predisposes its audience to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions" (23). The process by which a reader makes meaning of such a text is "by no means only an arbitrary series of merely subjective impressions" (Jauss 23). Rather, "The new text evokes for the reader (listener) [I would add viewer] the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts, which are then varied, corrected, altered, or even just reproduced" (Jauss 23). Jauss' elaboration of this idea is central to the notion of transformation that I develop below. He writes; "*Variation and correction determine the scope, whereas alteration and reproduction determine the borders of a genre-structure*" (23, italics mine).

By 1982, the phenomenal growth of Canadian theatre that Jaus's theory helps to illuminate was self-evident. In the theatre officers' panel cited above, Walter Learning comments that the highlight of his four-year tenure was "to see the maturation of a process that had been started long before" (Association 185). This process witnessed not only the production of Canadian plays but the formation of a theatrical infrastructure characterized by the emergence of a number of national (anglophone) theatre organizations--specifically, Playwrights Canada, the Association of Canadian Designers (ACD) and the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT).¹⁷ Learning is especially excited about "the quite remarkable and very untroubled transition of Actors' Equity into Canadian Actors' Equity, which I think has done a lot to change the context in which we work" (Association 185). Indeed, by 1982, not only the context but the content of theatre in Canada had changed. The 12 or 15 plays that Vincent Massey cited as Canadian drama 60 years earlier had multiplied into hundreds, dozens of which were available in print. That same year I was invited to join the editorial board of Coach House Press with the specific task of acquiring and editing new Canadian plays for publication.¹⁸ By this time, Simon and Pierre, Talonbooks, NeWest Press and other Canadian publishers had proven the economic viability of such endeavour. Canadian theatres were creating a market for Canadian plays in Canada and abroad. English and French departments of secondary schools and universities had begun to integrate Canadian plays into their curricula; theatre departments had started to produce Canadian writers; professional theatres in Canada and the United States needed production scripts of Canadian plays.

The dissemination of this repertoire quickly created the 'public' that Massey recognized as essential for Canadian drama. Far from a homogeneous audience that would engender national unity, however, it emerged as a conglomerate of local and particular audiences that reinforced the country's regional and cultural diversity. Massey predicted as much. In his 1922 article, he writes "Canada is a unit only in a political sense" (59). He goes on to remark that "In the elements out of which the drama is made--manners and social customs and atmospheres--there are several Canadas, for a country so scattered

geographically, and composed of so many types, diversified in their origin, is bound always to reveal great provincial divisions" (59). Nevertheless, he is able to imagine that "a characteristic feeling, manner or style, [is] possible that could be called Canadian" (60). This leads him to a conclusion whose reliance on a totalizing premise now seems, at best, quaint: "if our dramatists are both good Canadians and good artists their plays will have in them the essence of Canada, and will embody the spirit of the country, whatever that may be, and Canada will be the richer for them" (63).

The diversified "public" for Canadian theatre that emerged by 1982 illustrates the concept of "reading communities" that Stanley Fish posits in his theory of reader response. For Fish, readers exist as collectivities whose shared experiences and values influence the ways they interpret texts.¹⁹ Reading communities, or *interpretive* communities as he eventually calls them, can and do change.²⁰ Susan Bennett considers that interpretive communities comprise 'institutions' which invariably alter. She writes: "Interpretive communities are not stable, holding privileged points of view, but represent different interpretive strategies held by different literary cultures at different times" (40). The mutability of reading communities accounts for the changes in interpretation and evaluation that diachronic analyses of texts invariably produce. It also elucidates the emergence of Canadian theatre during the early 1970s and its growth throughout the remainder of the decade.

The "rising expectations" of Canadian theatre audiences that the Canada Council identified during the late 1960s are tantamount to "the horizon of expectations and rules familiar from earlier texts" that Jauss theorizes (23) in his essay. For these audiences, "the earlier texts" primarily consist of "the three Cs" produced at Canada's Regional Theatres. Jean Roberts notes that in 1967, "there was a tremendous amount of criss-crossing of the country of various performing arts companies." She recalls that these companies "gave nearly three thousand extra performances in that given year, and they had about 75% attendance;" more importantly, she remembers that "The Canada Council [. . .] detected that although this richness couldn't continue, some of it was certainly going to stick" (Association 169). Presumably, not only an interest in theatre would "stick" with the audience but a set

of expectations about form, content and production quality as well. For these expectations to alter, other influences would have to affect the audience's cultural disposition.

The influences that altered the "rising expectations" of the audience for theatre in Canada during the late 1960s and early 1970s are best approached as the interpretive strategies of a generation of 'readers' influenced by cultural conditions different from those that affected earlier generations. To fully apprehend the importance of this idea, it is necessary to recognize that 'readers' or, preferably, 'interpretive communities' generate meaning not only by reading texts but by creating them as well. As Fish explains, "interpretive communities are made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (*Is* 171). By the early 1970s, the cultural circumstance of the interpretive communities that constituted the audience for theatre in Canada predisposed them "to a very specific kind of reception by announcements, overt and covert signals, familiar characteristics, or implicit allusions" (Jauss 23). To be precise, at the same time that the Regional Theatres were developing an audience for international texts, alternate theatres were engaged in a process by which these texts were "varied, corrected, [and] altered" (Jauss 23) to suit the aims and circumstances of a cultural practice avidly promoted as 'Canadian.' For example, in a manifesto titled "Theatre is event not architecture" that circulated in Toronto in 1969, Jim Garrard marshalled the audience for Theatre Passe Muraille with the following exhortation:

The renaissance of the theatre as experience, as event, demands that contact be made (i) among the actors, who must work together as a continuing ensemble; (ii) between the actors and those individuals termed 'the audience'; (iii) and, because theatre is a human event, between people and people. (qtd in Rudakoff 251)

The valorization of communication that marks Garrard's rhetoric is typical of the announcements that contextualize Canadian theatre during

the 1970s. By rationalizing the centrality of collective creation characteristic to Canada's alternate theatres during this period, it explains why this form of theatre quickly gripped the consciousness of audiences across the country. Rejecting the hierarchical structures of administration and performance institutionalized in the Regionals' approach to production, alternate theatres advocated a community experience that united spectators with performers in a celebration of local narratives and themes, often in physical situations that were 'primitive' in comparison to the facilities available in Regionals' "architecture." The "documentary" form of collective creation, as Filewod qualifies collective creation, "effectively reorders the fundamental relation of artist and society, and in so doing proposes new structures of dramatic language and metaphor upon which literary drama is based" (*Collective 14*). He continues:

At the core of the documentary impulse is an implicit critical statement that the conventional dramatic forms of the culture in question no longer express the truth of the society, usually because those conventional forms cannot accommodate rapid social change. The documentary approach provides a way for artists to realign the theatre to these changes. (*Collective 14*)

Filewod's observations corroborate the idea that the "variation and correction" (Jauss 23) of cultural practice, far from occurring accidentally, responds to changes in ideology, an idea I develop more fully in the next section of this essay. His observations also substantiate Bennett's theory of theatrical "frames" in which the cultural circumstances that constitute "the outer frame" of a performance affect a spectator's response to what occurs inside its "inner frame" and *vice versa*. Combining the theories of Fish and Jauss, Bennett contends that "The spectator comes to the theatre as a member of an already constituted interpretive community and also brings a horizon of expectations shaped by the pre-performance elements" (139). Like Jauss, she points out that this horizon is subject to "substantiation, revision, or negation" (140) by the performance of the text inside the "inner frame." "While the outer frame [. . .] will always mediate and

control receptive strategies available, an audience's conscious attention is to their perception of the physical presence of a fictional world" (Bennett 145). Bennett observes, "That audiences generally concur as to what is a good play and what is bad merely evidences aesthetic codes as culturally determined" (155).

In *Theatre Semiotics*, Marvin Carlson recasts Fish's notion of reading communities in terms specific to the theatre. Carlson explains that

The social organization of theatre as created and experienced makes its institutional structure more apparent than that of the book; its communities, by the active choice of assembling to attend plays, are more apparent as groups to themselves and to others than are the more dispersed literary communities. (13)²¹

Carlson's appraisal of theatre's "institutional structure" allows it to construct and circulate cultural value in the manner I suggested earlier.²² While, in 1922, Vincent Massey does not discuss theatre as an institution, he does note that theatre is a "structure" that incorporates "the material equipment of stage and auditorium [. . . as well as] the company of actors and craftsmen [*sic*]" (54). Because of his concern with the "public" necessary to support this structure, Massey includes the plays and productions that a theatre company creates as a constitutive element; it would be but a short step for him also to include the commentary about theatre that he himself writes and that I incorporate into this essay. Indeed, Massey's comparison of theatre to religion in his article begs an understanding of theatre's institutional function: Massey writes that "The drama cannot flourish apart from the theatre any more than religion can survive divorced from the church" (53). The latter, he subsequently notes, "is composed of a body of believers and is not merely a fabric of wood and stone" (54).

Massey's comparison of theatre to "a body of believers" warrants attention for it indicates his recognition of theatre's ability to transform the consciousness of the audience. Like all institutions, theatre provides "a structure of roles, relationships and functions for those who inhabit them" (Thwaites *et al.*, 132). While these structures usually achieve material dimension, their power resides as much in their symbolic effect

as in their physical form. In this regard, comments on religion by Stuart Hall also apply to theatre. Hall observes that religion "has no necessary, intrinsic, transhistorical belongingness. Its meaning--political and ideological--comes precisely from its position within a formation. [. . .] Since those articulations are not inevitable, not necessary, they can potentially be transformed [. . .]" (qtd in Grossberg 142).²³ For Hall, "articulation" signifies not only speaking but, additionally, "a linkage which is not necessary, determined, absolute and essential for all time" (qtd in Grossberg 141). As a result, he considers that the meaning of religion is specific to its expression in different social and historical contexts, to its "articulation" within and against other elements of culture; he suggests that "[religion] only *becomes* a unified social force through the constitution of itself as a collective subject within a unifying ideology" (qtd in Grossberg 144). This ideology is imbricated in cultural practices such as theatre, an institution formed not only by interactions between people (producers, performers, spectators) but by the practices and products that constitute these interactions--in other words, cultural texts.

Cultural theorists instruct that "Institutions reproduce themselves through discourse" (Thwaites *et al* 135). Hall considers that "the so-called 'unity' of a discourse is really the articulation of different, distinct elements which can be rearticulated in different ways because they have no necessary 'belongingness'" (qtd in Grossberg 141). This leads him to a proposition especially pertinent to the formation of Canadian theatre as I have been theorizing it above: "The 'unity' which matters is a linkage between that articulated discourse and the social forces with which it can, under certain historical conditions, but need not necessarily, be connected" (qtd in Grossberg 141). Hall's remark partakes of Mikhail Bakhtin's notion of dialogism, a theory of language in which "Each word tastes of the context and contexts in which it has lived its socially charged life" (Bakhtin 293). Like words, the texts and readings that contribute to an institutional discourse interact as if in dialogue with each other. Although these forms are more complex than words, like them, they exist "on the borderline between oneself and the other" (Bakhtin 293) where, as a result, they frequently become sites of

difference. For this reason, texts and discourse (and, indeed, individual words) offer cultural theorists productive sites for analysis.

Victor Burgin emphasizes that "discourse does not *express* the meanings of a pre-existent social order, it *constructs* those meanings and that order" (181). Substituting theatre for discourse in Burgin's sentence allows me to recast the trajectory I have traced for theatre in Canada from 1922-82: during this period, "theatre does not *express* the meanings of a pre-existent social order, it *constructs* the meanings and that order." This refiguring leads me to rearticulate the questions that I posed at the beginning of this paper so as to elucidate the transformation of Canadian theatre that occurs in subsequent decades. What meanings and what order does Canadian theatre construct during this period? Or, to invoke Kobena Mercer's question that I cite in the epigraph to this essay, *whose* meanings and *whose* order does it construct? In the following section, I address these questions by paying closer attention to the cultural imperatives that the trajectory follows, situating my inquiry more precisely in the domain of Cultural Studies.

Retracing the trajectory

In *The End of Art Theory*, Victor Burgin acknowledges that his approach to "discourse" relies on theories of knowledge and power developed by Michel Foucault during the 1970s. For Foucault, discourse never forms independently of institutions and relations of power; nor does it function in isolation from other discourses. As a result, Foucault prefers the term 'discursive formation' (or 'formulation'), proffering that 'formation' indicates the plurality of discourse at play in social relations. Burgin contends that Foucault is less interested in analyzing discourse than in investigating discursive formations, and he hypothesizes some of the questions that Foucault might bring to such an investigation. Not coincidentally, these resemble questions that I pose here. Burgin writes: "The questions Foucault would bring [to bear] are 'why have these discourses been produced and not others?'; 'what are the necessary conditions of their existence?'; 'how are they pre-constructed as the survival of previous discourses?' and so on" (184).

For Foucault, questions like these undertake an 'archaeology' of knowledge that "seeks to discover the whole domain of institutions, economic processes and social relations on which a discursive formulation can be articulated" (Burgin 184).²⁴ Hall proposes that "cultural studies is a discursive formation, in Foucault's sense" which, for Hall, means, "it refuses to be a master discourse or a meta-discourse of any kind" ("Cultural" 263). As an interdiscipline that examines "the ensemble of social processes by which meanings are produced, circulated and exchanged" (Thwaites *et al* 1), Cultural Studies is itself "a whole set of formations [. . . that] has its own different conjunctures and moments in the past" (Hall, "Cultural" 263). Hall argues that "although cultural studies as a project is open-ended, it can't be simply pluralist;" rather, it is political, "not that there's one politics already inscribed in it" ("Cultural" 263).

In his Introduction to *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value*, Robert Lecker poses a question *à la* Foucault that probes the cultural politics of both publishing and criticism: "Whose canonical values does a book entitled *Canadian Canons* undermine, promote, provoke?" (4). Lecker's question is central to canonical theory which investigates "how literature is the product of ideological forces that remain largely unexamined, even though these forces have created the values aligned with works called good or pronounced to be worthy of study" (Lecker 4). Although canonical theory chiefly examines literary texts, it inevitably approaches canon structures as "discursive and institutional arrangements," to reintroduce Eve Sedgwick's phrase, and thus enters the domain of Cultural Studies. The performance of theatre avails itself of canonical theory by institutionalizing aesthetic choices and production practices in ways similar to canon-formation. Theatre companies, by perpetuating notions of 'classic' drama and commissioning new plays, directly affect both publishing and education--the institutions most engaged with the formation of literary canons. The institution of 'theatre' transforms the consciousness of the audience not only through the discourse of performance but also through related discourses that contribute to its complexity as a discursive formation. Later in this section I consider one of these discourses by examining an instance of criticism; in the final section of

this essay, I consider yet another by returning to Lecker's question in a discussion of play publication. At this juncture, however, I want to problematize theatre in Canada by suggesting that its evolution during the last three decades parallels the development of Cultural Studies in Britain. This parallel is understandable given that, prior to 1967, Canadian artists turned to European forms, approaches and personnel (especially British) to develop theatre in Canada and that, subsequently, they faced the same globalizing forces as their British counterparts.

During the 1970s, those responsible for the formation of Canadian theatre reacted against earlier practice to champion 'indigenous' forms and content. In Foucauldian terms, they effected a 'reverse discourse' that reveals the power relations inherent to the discursive formation 'theatre in Canada.'²⁵ To shift to the register of Cultural Studies, during this period, the activities of Gass and his contemporaries illustrate the articulation of a representational practice to changing social conditions that allows one "to 'think', in a non-reductionist way, the relations between 'the social' and 'the symbolic'" (Hall, "For Allon" 287). In their Introduction to *Viewing, Reading, Listening: Audiences and Cultural Reception*, Cruz and Lewis provide a description of British Cultural Studies during the 1970s that could just as easily describe the struggle of theatre in Canada at that time. The writers locate this struggle "within the very juncture of Western Marxism's crisis around class politics, working-class histories, and traditional as well as emergent forms of popular culture" (5). During the 1980s, they suggest, the absorption by British Cultural Studies of poststructuralism, semiology and psychoanalytic theory "helped to open [it to] the study of signification and its relation to ideology, institutions, cultural practices, and modes of social exchange" (5-6), particularly in relation to issues of race, gender and sexual orientation. Again, their summary applies to Canadian theatre whose institutional nature was challenged during the 1980s and 1990s by social shifts in which cultural and ethnic diversity replace previous notions of homogeneity and unity. Cruz and Lewis propose that, by the mid-1990s, inquiries about audience subjectivities (what I consider the abiding concern of Cultural Studies and its primary offshoot, Media Studies) coalesce into a view that inadvertently summarizes the current state of theatre in Canada. They write:

"audiences [are] seen as surrounded by (and constructed by) different histories and accounts, in a world in which the media [compete] with the other representations, practices, and experiences that [shape] people's lives" (10).

The desire to regulate the "histories and accounts" that contribute to the individual and collective consciousness of Canadian subjects--what Parker *et al* call "representational labour"--led the Canadian government to establish the Canada Council by parliamentary act in 1957. I use the verb 'to regulate' here with some deliberation. Although many discuss the service that the Council renders the arts in Canada in terms that more positively echo its mandate ("to foster and promote the study and enjoyment of, and the production of works in the arts" [qtd in Wilson, "Jury" 5]), some do not. Ann Wilson, for example, acknowledges the importance of the Canada Council "to the cultural life of this country"; nevertheless she admonishes that "we need to recognize that the Canada Council is a political institution" ("Jury" 8). While I agree with her, I think that the regard in which one holds the Council is less important than the fact that it exists. As Paul Litt notes, the existence of the Canada Council confirms that "cultural policy [is] a serious and sustained interest of the Canadian state" (375).

In an article titled "The Essential Role of National Cultural Institutions," Joyce Zemans identifies the Canada Council as "Canada's principal instrument of government support to artists and arts organizations" (147). In the same article, Zemans explains that the Council originally was funded not from taxes, as it is today, but "from windfall death duties representing an original endowment of \$50 million" (148). Wilson, in her analysis of the Council's operations, contends that the Council's original funding institutionalized "arts patronage which hitherto had been performed as a kind of *noblesse oblige* by the wealthy" ("Jury" 5, original italics). She argues that in subsequent years,

When the government agreed to underwrite the council's [sic] budget, it did so not as the result of a policy decision but because the existing financial arrangements were inadequate

to cover what was understood to be the council's mandate to support Canadian cultural production. ("Jury" 6)

Wilson also explains that the Canada Council's original endowment facilitated the ability of the Liberal government of Louis St. Laurent to accept the recommendation of the Massey Commission that the Council "be established at arm's length from government" (Zemans, "Essential" 148). Litt obtains that these recommendations themselves were constructed to allay concerns of "state-sponsored cultural nationalism" (379). He documents that, when the Commission held hearings prior to writing its report, "Some Canadians regarded the proposal [for a Canada Council] less as a means of saving the Canadian nation than as a clever guise for the old game of interest group politics" (380). As I have explained, by the early 1970s, many of the artists responsible for the rise of Canada's alternate theatres shared exactly this opinion, as does Wilson in 1987. She concludes her article by advising that "To ignore the politics of granting, to see the Canada Council as operating within a sphere which is free from ideological determination, is to be dangerously naïve" ("Jury" 8).²⁶

The establishment of the Canada Council effectively positioned 'arts and culture' within Canada's 'public sector.' Primarily, this move was provoked by the government's desire for national unity that accelerated after the Second World War.²⁷ Zemans explains that, in the realm of cultural policy, "Nationhood, national identity and cultural defense have [always] been at the heart of Canadian policies in support of cultural development as evidenced by the creation of Canada's major national institutions" (*Where?* 13). She notes that the Massey Commission considered the CBC, which parliament established in 1933, to be "Canada's 'greatest single agency for national unity'" (*Where?* 13). Presumably, the Commission felt similarly about the National Film Board that parliament founded and began to fund in 1939.²⁸ Clearly, federal subsidy for these two institutions affected the horizon of expectations that Canadian artists brought to the hearings that the Commission convened in the late 1940s. By then, at such well-organized events as the 'March on Ottawa' of June 1944, Canadian artists had publicly protested that "millions of persons living in Canada

have never seen an original work of art, nor attended a symphony concert or a professionally produced play. Millions have opportunities neither for realizing their own talents nor for achievement in post-educational fields" (qtd in Wagner 16-17).

The growing desire amongst Canadian artists for education and expression during the post-war period merged with perceptions of Americanization to create a brand of nationalism unique in Canadian history. Litt contends that this nationalism "was fueled by hope and fear--hope that Canada could seize the moment and ensure its destiny; fear that American influences would smother a new Canadianism in its cradle" (377). He also characterizes this moment as one "when Keynesian ideas had made Ottawa bureaucracy more amenable to proposals for state intervention" in the public sphere (381). He further notes that the fear of American influence at this time was strong enough to draw "French and English Canadians closer together in a defensive cultural alliance" (378). Ultimately, the Massey Commission exploited this fear by making recommendations that would appeal to St. Laurent's government. Woven throughout its recommendations is the warning that American mass culture would undermine the values of "independent thought and individual responsibility" necessary to liberal democracy (Litt 382). Filewod points out that while "Massey was concerned above all with the need to recognize and support national culture, [. . .] his insistence that Canadian nationhood proceeded from the historical marriage of two founding cultures reflected the ideology of the Liberal party" ("Between" 8).²⁹ He also maintains that Massey was aligned with government ideology in other ways which, if true, accounts for his appointment as Chair of the commission. Massey's "understanding of culture maintained the British axis of the generations that preceded him," Filewod writes: "His was a concept of culture that expressed the ideals of the proprietary class schooled at Oxford and infused with the genteel British attitudes of power, privilege, and cultural purity" ("National" 7).³⁰ Filewod substantiates the latter claim by noting the anti-Semitism of Massey's disparaging references to the "Old Testament names" of producers working for New York-based theatre syndicates (qtd in "National" 7).

According to Litt, not only Massey but all of his fellow commissioners "were drawn exclusively from what could be called the Canadian cultural elite" (380)--men whose sex, race and class predisposed them to privilege certain values and to disdain others. "Cultural elitism," Litt writes, "buttressed nationalism by providing it with a distinct identity and a conviction of moral superiority" (381). Central to this conviction were "the values of traditional high culture" and a belief that the United States "was the source of all that was tasteless and vulgar in modern life" (Litt 380). For Foucault, the occlusions that such convictions necessitate are as important as their argument. In the case of the Massey *Report*, its occlusions point to the "imperial affinities" (Filewod, "Between" 10) that attend the privileging of British models of 'high art' above all others. The *Report* demonstrates the imperialistic "gesture" of its 'anti-colonial' enterprise by its complete erasure of the cultural practice performed not only by Canada's aboriginal peoples but also by the country's working-class immigrants and those emanating from countries other than Britain or France.

To support his contention that Massey and his commissioners perpetuated the cultural values of the British elite, Filewod explains that Massey drew his inspiration for Canadian theatre from the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF) which, under the leadership of Earl Grey and Toronto's Arts and Letters Club, initiated a plan for a National Theatre composed of regional affiliates in 1945.³¹ He considers Massey's invocation of this model (which floundered because of disagreements amongst its initiators about the composition and location of such a prestigious 'national' enterprise) to be less egregious than his failure to acknowledge a more viable one--the workers' theatre movement that flourished across Canada during the 1930s. This movement differed from the DDF "in that it generated a dramatic literature out of its own experience, even though that literature (the classic example being *Eight Men Speak*) was marginalized by contemporary critics" (Filewod, "National" 9). Filewod explains that "The Workers' Theatre movement of the 1930s was made possible by the founding of Progressive Arts Clubs in major cities across Canada. For the most part, groups such as Toronto's Workers' Experimental Theatre adapted the agitprop

techniques current in Europe and the United States" ("Political" 422). He observes that, despite their use of foreign models, the Workers' Theatres "were an authentic populist movement generating plays out of the experience of the community" ("National" 9). He also proposes that the workers' theatre movement anticipated the process of collective creation espoused by Canada's alternate theatres during the 1970s by developing texts that "repudiated traditional notions of literary drama in favour of a textuality of performance" ("National" 9).³²

Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant corroborate Filewod's opinion of Massey's "anglomania" ("National" 7) when they observe that training at the DDF, as well as at Toronto's Hart House Theatre (from which Massey gleaned a collection of plays that he edited and published as a two-volume set in 1926-27), "became synonymous with British standards, reinforced by invited teachers and DDF adjudicators from England" (8).³³ Despite or, if Litt is correct, *because of* frequent Canadian tours by American theatre companies from the 1930s until the 1960s, "most [theatre] workshops and courses, even within the CBC, continued a tradition of imitation of British Theatre that began with garrison and amateur theatricals of the nineteenth century" (Saddlemyer and Plant 8). The Eurocentric notions of elitist art perpetuated by these institutions were not just British. Saddlemyer and Plant note that Michel Saint-Denis, a famous French actor and director, after adjudicating the DDF finals in 1952, was enjoined by the Canadian government to develop and head the National Theatre School which opened its doors in Montreal in 1960 (9).

The marginalization of the workers' theatre movement; the exclusive use of European models of training, production and evaluation at the DDF and elsewhere; the founding of festivals devoted to the plays of Shakespeare and Shaw; the devaluation of American forms of mass culture as 'low-brow' art: these activities reveal not only the "system of expectations" (Jauss 22) that greeted the endeavour of theatre practitioners in the years preceding the establishment of the Canada Council; they also expose the ideological nature of, as Jauss would have it, the information that predisposed audiences of the time to specific forms of reception. Saddlemyer and Plant wisely include the practice of theatre critics and academics when they consider the "hierarchy of

standards and values" that the prevailing ideology of the period constructs. After examining instances of this practice, they conclude that this hierarchy "encouraged the preference for the imported over the indigenous or community-based, professional over amateur, legitimate over variety, verbal or stylized over experimental or diffuse" (9). This hierarchy is imbricated not only in the recommendations of the Massey Report but in the federal government's responses to them.

Filewod is reluctant to endorse the common opinion that the founding of the Canada Council "superseded the inadequacies of the colonized past and established the conditions for the autonomous future" ("Between" 8). "The issue," he explains, "is not just one of the acceptance of state patronage as a principle, but of the notions of culture the state saw fit to patronize and the institutional structures it established for that purpose" ("Between" 8). In his view, the operations and policies of the new Canada Council "embodied an elitist concept of culture which had not changed in substance since Vincent Massey's student days at Oxford" ("Between" 8). Litt argues that Massey and his fellow commissioners not only were contemptuous of American art but of mass culture as well (380); indeed, he contends that they *equated* national culture with the high art of European cultures. As a result, the fact that the Canada Council illustrates that the "Canadian state became much more deeply involved in cultural affairs" (Litt 384) is less important to him than the corollary it implies--namely that "the cultural establishment adopted a particular identity [that] it could propagate [. . .] until there was ample cultural evidence that it was real" (Litt 384).³⁴

Arguments that demonstrate the imperialistic "gesture" of the 'anti-colonial' policies undertaken by the Canadian government in response to the Massey Report explain not only the cultural formation of Canadian theatre during the 1970s but its transformation in subsequent decades as well. Although federal support for the arts was barely 15 years old in 1970, it had become literally institutionalized in Canada's Regional Theatres. As a consequence, the artists who founded Canada's alternate theatres "perceived public subsidy as a right" (Filewod, "Between" 10). Most of these artists considered that governments' subsidy of the Regional Theatres sustained 'colonial' structures and styles of production.³⁵ Privileging new Canadian plays above all others,

these artists transformed the nationalism of the 1950s into a post-colonial position that championed 'indigenous' forms. Ironically, in pursuing these forms, they unwittingly perpetuated their imperialistic value.³⁶ Early in the 1970s, Ken Gass remarked, "I do not feel unusually nationalistic. I am simply trying to relate to the world around me" (qtd in Usmiani, *Second* 25). For him, as for many of his generation, the 'world' was (in)formed by an ideology that remained largely unchallenged in Canada's cultural institutions of the time--remained, in other words, one where 'Canadian' signified exclusionary eurocentric assumptions.

Theatre criticism written during this period provides many examples of this ideology at work. One example that is particularly ironic occurs in the second issue of *Canadian Theatre Review (CTR)* published early in 1974. Don Rubin, founding editor of the journal, stresses the need for a Canadian culture [*sic*], cautioning that "we must be extraordinarily careful not to let its potential disappear through colonial thinking or misguided liberalism." Ironically, Rubin develops his argument by invoking the recommendations of the Massey *Report*, noting that "The Massey Commission was well aware of this danger nearly a quarter century ago and it aided immeasurably in planting the seeds for a truly Canadian culture" ("Creating" 6). Rubin's comments are doubly ironic given that he, while failing to interrogate the notions of British 'taste' imbedded in the Massey *Report*, simultaneously attacks the 'imperial' control of Canadian theatre by British artists in other articles. In particular, he levels a diatribe against Robin Phillips, artistic director of the Stratford Festival, in *CTR 1*, aligning himself with alternate theatre practitioners who "rejected Stratford as the ultimate expression of a colonized theatre" (Filewod, "National" 9). For Rubin, the hiring of Phillips, a director from England, by Stratford's board of directors was a disgrace: as he wrote in *CTR*, "no other country in the world has a foreigner running its 'national theatre'" ("Aside" 5).

Like much of the theatre produced by Canada's alternate companies during the 1970s, critical discourse of this nature contributes to what Donald Pease terms a "national narrative"--a history or account that "sustains its coherence by transforming internal divisions into the symbolic demand that the subjects conscripted within its narrativity

misrecognize the figures it excludes as simulacra of themselves" (5). In such narratives, the assertion of 'nationality' as an anti-colonial strategy is common.³⁷ As Pease instructs, the agents of 'nationality' construct symbolic connections that transform disparate and different subjects into the imaginary coherence of a unified culture. Turning to the Canada Council for financial support after the collapse of LIP and OFY funding, Canada's alternate theatres discovered that Canada's Regional Theatres had garnered the lion's share of the theatre section's annual budget. Opposing these theatres as colonial operations, the alternate theatres constructed a national narrative necessary to their own survival. The Council, as David Peacock notes in the 1982 panel discussion cited above, "always responds to the needs of the theatre community" (Association 180); while he overstates the case, the financial statistics quoted above suggest the truth of his statement at that time. During the 1970s, the number of companies receiving subsidy from the Canada Council almost tripled. In many cases, the 'nationality' invoked by these only became evident once they received federal funding.

Despite its arms' length practice, the Canada Council's subsidy of alternate companies exacted structural changes to their operations. "Invariably, those [companies] that survived [the 1970s] did so by tempering their original radicalism to meet the institutional demands of the arts councils" (Filewod, "Between" 10). Increasingly, the Canada Council and other funders required that companies pursue private subsidy and increase their box-office income, arguing that this would allow funders to adjudicate theatres according to community support. To ensure fiscal stability, the Council "insisted that funds go to an incorporated body that could prove public accountability (usually through an elected board of directors of a not-for-profit corporation)" (Filewod, "Mummers" 5). By 1982, these policies, coupled with the Council's demand for administrative structures modeled on the private sector, led a number of smaller theatres to resemble their Regional counterparts in both business practice and programming choice. As Martin Kinch laments in his 1982 interview, "Theatres have become more concerned with desperate attempts to keep their heads above water, the desire to make commercial choices, the careerist aspirations of the people involved" (345).³⁸

In a study of Newfoundland's Mummers Troupe, Filewod documents the fate of one company that failed to meet the new demands: in October 1982, the Mummers' artistic directors issued a press release announcing their theatre's death ("Mummers" 30). To summarize his extensive examination of the rise and fall of the Mummers Troupe, Filewod proffers a conclusion pertinent to the trajectory I have retraced in this section: "To the extent that the underlying crises of Canadian culture were exposed within the internal operations of the company by its refusal to accept the Canada Council's terms of containment, the Mummers Troupe was the typifying expression of Canadian theatre in the 1970s" ("Mummers" 31). By the end of the 1980s, it would become more difficult to isolate a company whose "internal operations" so precisely signify relations between 'the symbolic' and the 'social.'

Transformations

By the mid-1980s, many of Canada's alternate theatres acquired real estate and boards of directors in their pursuit of the 'corporate' models that government funding bodies required.³⁹ In addition, most adopted unionized fee scales along with sophisticated marketing strategies and subscription seasons. By the end of the decade, the majority of these theatres also abandoned collective creation in favour of plays written by single authors, a practice some had preferred from their inception. No matter what their approach to creation, all continued to contribute to the discursive formation of Canadian theatre during this decade by further "educating" the "public" for a 'Canadian' repertoire. In retrospect, the 'anti-colonialism' of their enterprise enacts a discursive manoeuvre in which cultural practice articulates political conditions to effect what Benedict Anderson calls the "imagined community" of a national culture. By 1990, the impetus for this manoeuvre would undergo significant transformation, the consequences of which are still being felt.

Unlike the Regional Theatres who helped to shape the horizon of expectations of Canadian audiences by producing 'international' theatre, alternate theatres predisposed their audiences to new Canadian plays.⁴⁰ In 1984-85, a number of these were published in three anthologies

whose appearance confirmed the end of the scarcity of published scripts that allowed schools and universities to occlude Canadian plays from literary and dramatic curricula. Collectively, these anthologies identify Canadian theatre as a material body of texts; further, they consolidate its institutionalization by according it a distinctly 'Canadian' value. Richard Perkyms, the editor of *Major Plays of the Canadian Theatre*, avows that the plays in his collection are "not only of outstanding literary and theatrical quality but [. . .] at the same time reflect the total Canadian ethos" (ix). Jerry Wasserman asserts that *Modern Canadian Plays* "sample[s] the best or most successful or historically most important work" (7) produced in Canadian theatre, and thus fulfills his aim to present "as definitively as possible the highlights of modern Canadian drama in English" (19). For his part, Richard Plant suggests that the plays included in *Modern Canadian Drama* are "eminently worth performing or reading" (13)--primarily, it seems, because of the awards they have won: Plant writes, "among the twelve [plays] are six Chalmers Award nominees (four of them winners), the winner of the first Governor General's Award for published drama ([Sharon Pollock's] *Blood Relations*, 1981), and four nominees for the Dora Mavor Moore Awards (one winner)" (13). As I explain elsewhere, this 'criterion' for selection is especially ironic given that Plant "fails to consider that these awards will mean very little to many readers of this book who, he acknowledges, will 'include a number of people unfamiliar with Canadian theatre'" (Wallace, "Constructing" 221).⁴¹

Plant's reference to the first Governor General's Award for published drama is useful to my comments here, however. The Canada Council's decision to initiate the award in 1981 makes drama equal to the other genres of literature for which a 'GG' annually is determined.⁴² Unfortunately, the Council's decision to make publication the primary requirement of a play's eligibility for the award valorizes print as a preeminent cultural value. The Council's additional regulation that only plays *published in books* are eligible for submission (as opposed to those included in journals such as *CTR* which offers at least one play per issue) reinforces the logocentricity of the award by excluding forms of performance such as collective creation in which physical and imagistic techniques at least equal words in importance; such plays are rarely

written down, let alone published. Tony Hamill identifies other values that publication confers to a play, some more explicitly material: "a play in the form of a book is easily transported and sold, and, like it or not, implicit in being published is the notion that the publisher thought this play was one of the better plays written and produced that year" (15). Hamill's comment indicates how the emergence of the three 'national' anthologies in 1984-85 signals the commodification of Canadian theatre that continues to the present. Such anthologies, like publication in general, ensure that Canadian plays can be bought and distributed by schools and universities where they can expand the horizon of expectations of students and scholars to include 'modern Canadian drama' as a literary formation.

The publication and dissemination of the 1984-85 anthologies facilitates something more significant, however: the transformation of Canadian theatre itself. In their claim to a 'unique' status, the anthologies posit a cultural value within and against which subsequent artists can transform notions of both 'Canada' and 'drama.' To utilize Jauss' terminology, the anthologies facilitate the "variation and correction" of textual forms and structures that will expand the discursive institution of Canadian theatre during subsequent decades by providing easily accessible 'standards' of comparison.⁴³ Concomitantly, they affect an "alteration and reproduction" (Jauss 23) of Canadian production practices during this period, a transformation that not only will reconfigure performance as a genre but, as well, will redefine its relation as 'the symbolic' of representation to 'the social' of Canadian culture. Thus the formation of Canadian theatre that these anthologies institutionalize, like the transformation they make possible, is ideological--not in the Marxist sense, but in the one central to Cultural Studies. Here 'ideology' signifies "not a set of false beliefs held by a particular group or individual [but, rather . . .] a semiotic process which brings individuals and groups into certain power relations and provides social identity and knowledge about the world" (Thwaites *et al* 161-162). As "regimes of representation" (Hall, "New" 443), the 1984-85 anthologies function as representational labour and thus reveal "the power of texts to *transform* one thing into another, their ability to represent something, or state of affairs, as something else" (Thwaites *et*

al 162, original italics), an idea that Richard Paul Knowles implies in a review of the anthologies published in *Canadian Canons*.

Knowles assumes "that the modern English-Canadian canon is more or less accurately represented by the three national anthologies, and that it derives in part from the theatrical repertoire, in part from the publishers' lists, and in part from the group of plays that have received significant scholarly attention" (95).⁴⁴ His elision of the terms "English-Canadian" and "national" foregrounds the failure of federal governments to develop policies that ensure cultural, let alone political, unity--a failure that these anthologies enact in other ways.⁴⁵ Knowles opines that the canon which the anthologies construct "is shaped by the conservative, hierarchical, and nationalistic structures of theatrical production and funding, and by the interests of reviewers, academics, teachers, and audiences who for economic and historical reasons tend to be from the 'professional-managerial class'" (100-101).⁴⁶ To his question "What is left out," he answers, "virtually all regional, 'ethnic,' native, feminist, lesbian, gay, non-literary, or explicitly political drama that is subversive or 'ex-centric' on a formal or structural level [. . .]" (101). Knowles particularly laments that "the theatre of Canada's native peoples, past and present, has disappeared from the face of the canon" (102), recognizing, along with Eugene Benson and Len Conolly, that "'before the discovery and colonization of North America by Europeans, an indigenous drama of great richness and complexity flourished' in what is now Canada" (101).

Knowles' evaluation of the anthologies registers the transformation of Canadian theatre that was well underway by 1991, the year of its publication. By this time, theatre by aboriginal artists was being produced and promoted widely across Canada following the success of Native Earth Performing Arts which was established in Toronto in 1983 and whose production of Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* toured to national and international acclaim.⁴⁷ By 1983, a number of other theatres also had emerged to perform the "ex-centric" function missing from the Canadian theatre canonized in the anthologies.⁴⁸ "Just as the theatres of the 1970s challenged institutional culture as colonized, so were the confidently 'Canadian' theatres of the 1980s challenged in turn; now the terms of colonization had more to do with gender and ethnicity

than with imperial affinities" (Filewod, "Between" 10). Filewod's comment both corroborates and explains the transformation of Canadian theatre that occurs during the 1980s by making "colonization" a relational term: his remark summarizes the process by which the colonized entity signified by 'theatre in Canada' now becomes the colonizer, 'Canadian theatre.' While the imperial gesture of 'Canadian' theatre imbricated in its 'anti-colonial' strategy had not changed by the mid-1980s, the relation between the 'symbolic' and 'the social' in which it functioned so "confidently" had begun to alter--to transform into an understanding of 'Canada' whose pluralism has more in keeping with postmodern notions of particular identities than with nationalist imaginings of homogeneous cultures.

Donald Pease proposes that "revision in the genealogy of national identity rediscovers its source in social movements rather than national narratives" (6). He contends that "Whereas the national narrative result[s] in the assimilation of differences to the self-sameness of ruling assumptions [. . .] the postnational narratives dismantle this opposition" (4). In 1967, Northrop Frye noted that Canada has "had a hundred years in which to make the transition from a pre-national to a post-national consciousness" (17). The formation of Canadian theatre during the following 15 years indicates that the transition he identified remained unrealized in at least one representational practice. The transformation of Canadian theatre during subsequent decades would both achieve Frye's transition and illustrate Pease's description of a post-national narrative whose agents are the "national subject peoples, figures of race, class, and gender, who had been previously interpolated within the hegemonic category of disqualified social agency" (4). This transformation also would demonstrate the abiding desire of these subjects to assert their own histories and accounts in a world where 'post-national' additionally signifies the forces of globalization.

Charles Taylor obtains that 'globalization' is generally understood as "a market that is much more international than in the past" (331). He also recognizes that the term frequently signifies "the development of world media spaces" (332). More interesting, both to him and me, is another force of globalization that he identifies as "*the tremendous increase in international migration and the consequent diversification*

of the populations in many countries" (332, original italics). Taylor suggests that a "diasporic consciousness" attends this increase, a phenomenon he explains in an essay titled "Globalization and the Future of Canada":

People now live in imagined spaces, spaces where they see themselves situated within a certain society, and more and more of these spaces straddle borders and other boundaries. You now have people who are in many ways fully integrated as citizens of their new countries, but at the same time retain active interest and contact with people in their country of origin. (332)

Taylor's observations illuminate how the transformation of Canadian theatre attends the diversification of the country's population during the last two decades. Given the increase in immigration that typifies the post-war period, this transformation was predictable. Not until the 1980s, however, did Canadian theatre begin to represent the transformation of Canadian subjects from, in Pease's terms, "the status of objects of social regulation within the national narrative into performative powers, postnational forces able to change that narrative's assumptions" (4). Filewod explains one of the reasons for this delay by noting that "The Liberal ideology of the Trudeau years needed an active, nationalist theatre as one of the proofs of its vision of Canada as a true federation which was post-colonial in the technical sense of the term: a culture that had moved beyond colonial signifiers to 'true Canadianism'" ("Between" 11). Zemans provides another observation about federal policy during "the Trudeau years" that explains why the transformation of Canadian theatre nevertheless would occur in subsequent decades: "the 1970s saw the shaping of a strategy which emphasized the creation 'cultural democracy,'" a strategy that "required participants at the national level to find the means for *local* cultural expression" (*Where?* 15-16, original italics).

During the 1980s, the strategy of 'cultural democracy' would converge with the "diasporic consciousness" of a generation of artists whose "imagined communities" challenged the homogeneous concept of

'Canada' endemic to Canadian theatre during the 1970s. During this decade the centrality of 'local experience' in government programmes begins to emerge as multicultural policy--"an ideological construct for accommodating diversity while attempting to sustain legitimacy for individuals as members of groups, and for groups, as well as individuals, as constituent elements of the polity" (Zemans, *Where?* 19). In this regard, Filewod claims that Canada resembles Australia for "in both countries post-imperial governments promoted multiculturalism as an ideology of nationalism to satisfy the post-colonial need for a defining national principle" ("Between" 11). While in the 1990s, artists would protest "their categorization on the bases of race and ethnicity [. . .] and their [concomitant] exclusion or peripheralization by the major cultural institutions" (Zemans, *Where?* 20), in the 1980s, many embraced the concepts of difference focused on race, gender, class and sexual orientation. Consequently, while there is some validity to Filewod's assertion that the institution of theatre in Canada "continued to reflect the actual distribution of wealth and power in Canadian society" during this period, his corresponding claim that "the fact of official multiculturalism [. . .] had little impact" on the discursive practice of Canadian theatre ("Between" 11) is less convincing. During the early Eighties, the "diasporic consciousness" of many Canadian artists generated representations of "imagined communities" that challenged the institutions of Canadian culture by asserting difference, not commonality, as a primary aesthetic.

To cite one important example: in 1979, above a Greek discotheque on the Danforth Strip of Riverdale, East Toronto, The Theatre Centre opened the doors on its first production. By 1981, the Centre had moved to a warehouse in the industrial area of King and Bathurst Streets. For the remainder of the decade, it would rent a variety of venues until securing a long-term lease at 1032 Queen St. West in 1989. Begun "as a cooperative venture between six Artistic Directors who needed affordable space to pursue their experimental interests" (Smith 34), by 1983 its companies had shrunk to four--A.K.A. Performance Interfaces, Autumn Angel Repertory Company,⁴⁹ Buddies in Bad Times and Nightwood Theatre. Each of these companies espoused formal innovation and multidisciplinary as central priorities. According to

Sky Gilbert, one of the founders of Buddies in Bad Times, the company's original mandate was "to explore the relationship of the printed word to theatrical image in the belief that with the poet-playwright lies the future of Canadian theatre" (Smith 35). By the mid-1980s, Buddies had reworked this mandate to emphasize gay and lesbian as well as innovative creation.⁵⁰ In the case of Nightwood Theatre, gender and sexual identity also played an explicit role in the company's inception. As Shelly Scott explains,

While not specifically intended as a feminist company by its four founders, Nightwood gradually became identified as feminist, largely because of external perceptions. Over the years, the company presented itself as a producer of new works by Canadian women, as a provider of opportunities for women theatre artists, and, most recently, as an inclusive theatre company committed to producing work by women of colour. (191-192)

Not coincidentally, Nightwood was committed "to an inclusive, collective structure" (Scott 193) in which collective creation is a priority.⁵¹

With its move to the Poor Alex Theatre near Brunswick and Bloor Streets in 1984, the Theatre Centre became the main locus of a new wave of Toronto theatre for the rest of the decade. An 'umbrella' facility that produces work by its resident companies as well as dozens of other 'small theatres,'⁵² the Theatre Centre champions experimentation and innovation in both the process and production of new work.⁵³ Surveying the creation of Toronto's small theatres in an article published in 1983, Patricia Keeny Smith notes that it "combines techniques old enough to recall dithyramb and masks with the newest technological gadgetry of video and electronic music" (43). She qualifies her "multidimensional" experience of this theatre as "sensual and perceptual bombardment, multiplicity of choice, the crudely comic underside of tragedy, the surrealistic base of ordinary event, the isolation of the heart" (43).

During the early 1980s, new theatre companies began to collaborate in cities across Canada to create venues similar to The Theatre Centre. In places such as Espace Libre in Montreal and the Vancouver East Cultural Centre, these companies experimented with approaches to theatrical creation in which, as Filewod notes in his Introduction to *The CTR Anthology* of plays that he edited in 1993, "the traditional understanding of literary textuality" still predominant in the alternate theatres "was enriched by a growing awareness of the textuality of performance" (xvii). Discussing the plays in his collection, Filewod offers a comment that appears to contradict his earlier remarks about the failure of 'multiculturalism' to impact on Canadian theatre:

Taken together, the plays in this anthology can be read as a narrative of the development of the idea of Canadian nationalism, which progresses from the essentialist notion of a national identity arising out of regional difference, to a pluralistic intersection (and often conflict) of community interests. As such, this volume both constructs an idea of Canadian culture and deconstructs it as a contradictory notion that may in the end elude any attempt at definition (or in narrative terms, at closure.) (xvi)

In all likelihood, Filewod's earlier remarks stem from the fact that companies such as Native Earth Performing Arts, Buddies in Bad Times and Nightwood achieved little subsidy when they initially turned to governments for financial support. While in the province of Ontario money for the arts had increased from \$300,000 in 1963 to \$21 million in 1985, other provinces had not been as generous (Wagner 17). Nor had federal funding kept pace with artistic development. Discovering that few public monies remained for their subsidy, these new companies found themselves in a position similar to the one that Canada's alternate theatres experienced less than a decade earlier. Now, however, they had to compete for government funds not only with the Regional Theatres but with many of these alternates as well. In another historical replay, many of these artists marched on Ottawa in March 1985 to protest cuts of over \$100 million in federal support to the arts (Wagner 17).⁵⁴ This

time their protest failed to win them greater support, however, for a different government held power, one whose priorities privileged the 'private sector.'

Joyce Zemans identifies that "the rapid delegitimization of the public sphere" began in the 1980s--a paradigm shift that would see a "transformation in the focus of Canadian cultural policy away from a nationalist, public service, market corrective approach towards a growing emphasis on a market ideology" (*Where?* 11). In "Between Empires," Filewod follows this shift into the 1990s, concluding "If the cultural assumptions of the Massey *Report* derive from the imperial traditions of Great Britain, the assumptions of public funding in the 1990s reflect a tendency to conform to the ideological priorities of the United States" (13). Ironically, the fear of Americanization that contributed to the establishment of the Canada Council in the early 1950s is transformed in the 1980s into the North American Free Trade Alliance (NAFTA) whose regulations handcuff federal policies aimed at protecting arts and culture in favour of 'post-national' economics.⁵⁵ Zemans comments on the current effects of this shift:

If, historically, the cost of culture was at issue within the nation state, the new value system being imposed by neoconservative forces today challenges not only the borders of the state but also the power of the public sector, eroding notions of the public interest and a community of shared experiences, and challenging the state to cede responsibility to the marketplace. (*Where?* 7)

In March 1985, the same month that Canadian artists marched on Ottawa, a commercial production of *Cats*, a musical by the British composer, Andrew Lloyd Webber, opened the partially renovated Elgin theatre in downtown Toronto. In an article published two years earlier, Ross Stuart comments presciently that the renovation of the Elgin and Winter Garden theatres might lead to "what is probably essential for a world-class theatre community--a theatre district... [which] may indeed become the heart of Toronto theatre" (23-24). The completion of the Elgin theatre, along with the success of *Cats*,⁵⁶ began a new phase of

theatre in Canada whose narrative is still unfolding. As early as 1985, Anton Wagner stressed that this phase of commercial activity is indebted to "The hundreds of millions of dollars in government subsidies spent on the performing arts over the past two decades" (17), public monies that enable the infrastructure crucial to such expensive private enterprise.⁵⁷

While it is tempting to read the formation of Canadian theatre and its subsequent transformation as the consequence of power relations in which federal agencies such as the Canada Council wield the most control, it has been my aim throughout this paper to credit cultural practice with the ability to both initiate and respond to social change. In his Introduction to *The CTR Anthology*, Filewod alludes to "a growing body of plays that *reflect* the experiences of immigrants and cultural minorities" (xvi, my italics). I have suggested that these plays, like the theatres that produce them, function more proactively than he proposes. Indeed, their power lies less with reflection than revelation--the process by which they articulate the issues and images that circulate in the "diasporic consciousness" of identity communities to the cultural conditions that delimit and determine their existence. Filewod suggests that while these plays "can be analyzed in terms of changing perspectives on Canadian identity, they might be more usefully read along with similar Australian, Caribbean and British plays in terms of global post-colonialism" (xvi). I agree, for in this remark I find a figuring of "imagined communities" that potentially transforms the political and geographical boundaries of nations by asserting not a politic of identity but, rather, affinity.

In *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Benedict Anderson proposes a definition of 'nation' as a political community "imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign" (6). A nation is imagined in the sense that "the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Nations are imagined as limited "because even the largest of them, encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic, boundaries, beyond which lie other nations" (7). They are imagined as sovereign because they "dream

of being free, and, if under God, directly so" (7). Finally, nations are communities, "because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible [. . .]" (7).

Anderson also argues that a nation can be viewed as more than an ideological construct in the Marxist sense. He proposes that "nation-ness" be conceived "as if it belonged with 'kinship' or 'religion,' rather than with 'liberalism' or 'fascism'" (5). Andrew Parker and the co-editors of *Nationalisms and Sexualities* consider Anderson's idea to be "a major recasting of existing accounts of the nation" (5). They explain that "where others have condemned nationalism simply as an effect of false consciousness, Anderson re-describes it as a variable cultural artifact that is neither reactionary nor progressive in itself" (5). Anderson's idea allows Parker *et al* to approach 'nationality' as "a *relational* term whose identity derives from its inherence in a system of differences" (5, italics mine). In the manner of Foucault, they argue that by "Implying 'some element of alterity for its definition,' a nation is ineluctably 'shaped by what it opposes'" (5).

In 1991, to introduce an issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* devoted to theatre by native peoples, Monique Mohica, its guest editor, notes that she commissioned articles "from and about Native theatre artists from throughout Turtle Island" which she qualifies as North, Central and South America (3). Mohica explains that "This was done to emphasize that the national borders of the First Nations pre-date the political borders of Canada, the United States, Mexico, Panama etc." (3). She continues: "Our common history bridges those borders and limitations. What is remarkable is that across great geographical and cultural distances, theatre has become an instrument of our recovery" (3).

The "recovery" to which Mohica refers is also an 'uncovery' which reveals that Canada is as much an "imagined community" as the First Nations Mohica celebrates. While the term 'Canada' both signifies and secures an "institutional arrangement" that 'First Nations' lacks, it also identifies a 'community' whose meaning is arbitrary and relational, and, therefore, just as mutable as the First Nations themselves--"imagined

communities" whose histories illustrate the vulnerable relation of symbolic constructions to social systems of power. Like the First Nations that today are formed by the "diasporic consciousness" of aboriginal peoples who identify as their subjects, Canada is maintained by the consciousness of people who cede social and symbolic relevance to its political materiality. As tensions between provincial and federal governments confirm, not everyone cedes the same degree or perception of relevance to this materiality. This is not to consign the concept of 'nation' "to the category of (mere) fiction," however. As Parker *et al* explain, if a nation is 'imagined'--"if it is a 'dream'," as they put it-- "it is one possessing all the institutional force and affect of the real" (11-12). It is here, in its institutional force, that 'nation' aligns with 'gender', for the discursive limits of both terms regulate and control the power relations that they affect.⁵⁸ Thus Anderson's comment that "Communities are to be distinguished not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined" (6) applies to each. In both cases, what is 'imagined' is the purview not only of the state but also of the people who lend it credibility, the "body of believers" to which Vincent Massey compared the audience for Canadian theatre almost 80 years ago.

A final word

Throughout this essay, I have argued that the beliefs of an audience are produced by discursive practices in which representation figures prominently, for it "brings individuals and groups into certain power relations and provides social identity and knowledge about the world" (Thwaites *et al* 161-162). As Parker and his co-editors observe, "Newspapers, film, novels and theater all create sexed bodies as public spectacles, thereby helping to instill through representational practices an erotic investment in the national romance" (12). Their subsequent remark is more pertinent to the position I have stressed throughout: "But these same media can be deployed as well for other kinds of civic education, counter-narratives that reveal the dangers implicit in such castings of national history" (12).

Like Parker and his co-editors, I believe that "it is the lived crises endured by national and sexual bodies that form our most urgent priorities" (13-14). In Canada, the crises that regularly confound proponents of 'national' projects parallel the crises experienced by bodies that challenge the normativities of sex, race, gender and class in their daily lives. Zemans considers that "Awareness of the need for a policy premised on true cultural democracy rather than on external difference has (somewhat late in the day) begun to influence cultural policies at every level of the Canadian experience" (*Where?* 20). Substantiation of her claim requires another essay. If she is correct, however, the challenge for policy-makers is pluralism itself which, as Kobena Mercer explains, "demands a relational and dialogic response which brings us to a perspectival view of what antagonistic movements have in common, namely that *no one has a monopoly on oppositional identity*" (290, original italics). As Mercer points out, "The new social movements structured around race, gender, and sexuality are neither inherently progressive nor reactionary" (290). Indeed, like nations, they describe what Claude Lefort calls "the political indeterminacy of democracy" itself (qtd in Mercer 290). While this indeterminacy is sometimes difficult to endure, the opportunities it provides for social justice far outweigh the anxieties that it induces. To fully realize the potential of these opportunities in the world media space of the 21st century, particularities of place and position must achieve alliances yet unimagined.

Notes

¹ See, for example, Ball and Plant, and Filewod ("National" 5).

² In *Performance Theory*, Schechner discusses the practical instances of theatrical transformation as follows:

At the level of the staging there are costumes and masks, exercises and incantations, incense and music, all designed to "make believe" in the literal sense--to help the performer make her/himself into another person or being, existing at another time in another place, and to manifest this presence here and now, in this theater, so that time and place are at least doubled. If the transformation works, individual spectators will experience changes in mood and/or consciousness; these changes are usually temporary but sometimes they can be permanent. (170)

³ This idea also is indebted to Michel Foucault whose writings constitute a life-long meditation on the relation of discourse to power. In *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1*, Foucault writes that power must be understood not only as "the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization" but also as "the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, *transforms, strengthens or reverses them*" (92, italics mine).

⁴ The "lag" in the development of theatre behind literary arts that Massey identifies in the 1950s partially accounts for the relatively unsophisticated state of Theatre Studies. While poststructuralist theory, for example, has indelibly affected literary studies in Canadian universities, only recently has it begun to affect approaches to theatre pedagogy and criticism. This situation is not unique to Canada, which Sue-Ellen Case, an American feminist and performance theorist, both elucidates and explains in an article about American theatre published in 1991:

Theatre departments are relatively new to the university. Prior to their founding, the study of theatre was located within English departments. This location meant that the study of theatre was regarded primarily as the analysis of playtexts, isolating them from practice, and employing the devices common to literary studies. When theatre departments were founded, their primary focus was and still is, in training

practitioners. As the study of theatre within theatre departments developed, it was dominated by the history of theatre, rather than its criticism. Theatre criticism still resides primarily in English departments [. . .]. Thus, current critical strategies applied to contemporary texts and practices, such as those of feminist theory, inhabit a severely marginal position in both theatre and English departments. (2)

⁵ See Czarnecki (47) for a complete list of Canada's Regional Theatres.

⁶ For example, see Filewod ("National"); Rubin ("Creeping"); Czarnecki; Wallace and Zimmerman.

⁷ The productions of Canadian plays most frequently cited from this period include George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita-Joe* at the Vancouver Playhouse (1967), Ann Henry's *Lulu Street* at the Manitoba Theatre Centre (1967) and James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark* at Stratford (1969). See also Czarnecki.

⁸ This was primarily the case in Montreal and Toronto, the two Canadian cities where theatre communities were most evolved. In Toronto, Toronto Workshop Productions had united two hitherto unconnected not-for-profit professional companies in 1959--the Arts Theatre Club under Basya Hunter and Workshop Productions under George Luscombe. Luscombe was named artistic director of the combined operation in 1961. See Carson. Theatre Passe Muraille produced its first show in the basement of Toronto's Rochdale College in 1969. See Johnston, Usmiani (*Second*), and Wallace (*Producing*).

⁹ While 'alternate' often is used interchangeably with 'alternative' in discussions of Canadian theatre, the former term has a specific meaning in Canada where it originally signified theatres that, in their opposition to the 'official' culture represented by the Stratford Festival and the Regional Theatre system, sought to provide alternate approaches and venues for the creation of theatre by Canadian artists. As Usmiani argues in Chapter One of *Second Stage*, 'alternative,' at least when applied to theatre, can signify an approach that cuts across borders in both its techniques and characteristics. In *Collective Encounters*, Alan Filewod appears to use 'alternative' to signify those Canadian theatres that Usmiani and others call 'alternate' (cf. Wallace and Zimmerman).

¹⁰ For example, in her article on Nightwood Theatre published in 1997, Shelly Scott cites *Up the Mainstream*, Denis Johnston's history of Toronto theatre published in 1991 to substantiate her assertion that

These small, experimental companies, such as Theatre Passe Muraille, were reacting against the domination of the established regional theatre system by foreign productions. While the initial inspiration for the new companies came from the international avant-garde--companies like the Living Theatre in New York, for example--their motivation quickly came to include Canadian nationalism. (192)

¹¹ Published examples of this form of Canadian play include *The Farm Show* (Toronto: Coach House, 1976), *Ten Lost Years* and *This is for You, Anna* (Filewod, *CTR Anthology*), and *I Love You, Baby Blue* (Erin: Press Porcepic, 1977).

¹² The panel, chaired by William Kilbourn, was convened in June 1982 by the Association for Canadian Theatre History on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Council. Roberts, who was theatre officer from 1967-1970, was joined by David Gardner (1971-2), David Peacock (1972-78), Claude Des Landes (1978-81, French section) and Walter Learning (1978-1982). See Association (165).

¹³ In 1976, Statistics Canada documents that

A total of 11,740 performance given by the 45 theatre companies in 1976 attracted 3.6 million spectators. Approximately 30% of these performances were given on tour. The number of persons attending each performance averaged about 300. Home performances drew larger audiences than performances given on tour. (*Culture* 9)

¹⁴ Jerry Wasserman, for example, in his Introduction to *Modern Canadian Plays*, cites 1967 as "the year that English Canadian drama began to achieve legitimacy" (9).

¹⁵ Patrick McDonagh covers the rise and fall of the Crest Theatre from 1954-1966, paying special attention to the reasons for its demise. Also see the special issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* devoted to the Crest in Summer 1975 (issue 7).

¹⁶ Canadian literary historians and cultural theorists frequently construct 1967 as a watershed year, primarily because the federal grants that marked its celebration enabled a number of initiatives that constructed both Canadian history and its monuments as unusually important. In his "Introduction" to *Post-National Arguments*, for example, Frank Davey uses the year to demark the beginning of his study of English-Canadian novels, explaining

My choice of 1967 as the beginning date of this study is a symbolic one, intended to highlight the contrast between that centennial year and the uncertainties of 1992. This is an openly post-centennial study, one that sets the centennial and its nationalist sentiments aside, as it were, at the same time as it accepts the writing that has followed as to some extent caused or enabled by that event. (6)

Like Davey in his study, I am concerned in this essay not with "those nationalistic sentiments themselves but the constructions of nation that have ensued from them, from 1967 through to the difficult present" (6).

¹⁷ The term "national (anglophone)," while almost an oxymoron, sustains pertinence in Canada, a fact that I address in the final section of the essay.

¹⁸ Coach House Press, one of Canada's most respected literary publishing houses until its demise in 1995, published a few Canadian plays before I joined the editorial board in 1982 (most importantly, *The Farm Show* in 1976). It had not developed a plan or a policy regarding play publication, however. Indeed, for the other members of the editorial board at that time (a collective of artists dominated by poets and fiction writers), plays were not a priority. Initially, I was invited to select and publish one drama title a year. With the success of my first publication, however (Anne Chislett's *Quiet in the Land* which not only won the Governor General's Award for Drama in English in 1983 but also garnered sufficient sales to become a staple of the CHP back-list), I immediately was encouraged to publish two titles a year. Moreover, because I began to publish collections of plays such as Margaret Hollingsworth's *Willful Acts* (1985) and *Quebec Voices* (1986), I was able to increase the number of plays that the press annually published by significant numbers. By the time I left the press shortly before its collapse, I had published more than 20 volumes totaling over 100 plays. For further discussion of Coach House Press see Davey ("Coach"), and Wallace ("Fall").

¹⁹ To the chagrin of his detractors, Fish privileges the experience of the reader in the process of interpreting a text. Catherine Belsey, for example, takes umbrage with the fact that Fish "makes no attempt to account in theoretical terms for the relationship between experience and language, ideology and history" (34).

²⁰ Fish introduces his theory of "reading communities" in *Self-Consuming Artifacts* (1972). In *Is There a Text in This Class?* (1980), he modifies the term to "interpretive communities."

²¹ For a fuller discussion of this idea, especially as it relates to gay and lesbian audiences, see my "Performance Anxiety."

²² This perception of theatre remains relatively new in Theatre Studies. In an article titled "New Historicism and American Theater History," Bruce McConachie offers some reasons for the academy's "malign neglect" of the theorizing of American theatre and drama as social and historical formations, illustrating again that the problem is not merely a Canadian phenomenon.

²³ "Articulation" has a specific meaning within the context of British Cultural Studies that Hall addresses in this interview with Lawrence Grossberg (cf 141-145). For a fuller account, see Jennifer Slack.

²⁴ For Foucault's explanation of the term 'archaeology' as he uses it throughout his work, see Part IV of *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, especially Chapter 1, "Archaeology and the History of Ideas." While Foucault's discussion in this section is far too complex to summarize here, an excerpt illustrates its pertinence to my project:

Archaeology [. . .] may thus constitute the tree of derivation of a discourse. [. . .] It will place at the root, as *governing statements*, those that concern the definition of observable structures and the field of possible objects, those that prescribe the forms of description and the perceptual codes that it can use, those that reveal the most general possibilities of characterization, and thus open up a whole domain of concepts to be constructed, and, lastly, those that, while constituting a strategic choice, leave room for the greatest number of subsequent options. And it will find, at the ends of the branches, or at various places in the whole, a burgeoning of 'discoveries' [. . .], conceptual transformations [. . .], the

emergence of new notions [. . .], technical improvements [. . .].
(147, original italics)

²⁵ Foucault explains his idea of "reverse discourse" in *The History of Sexuality, Volume 1* when he argues that the insertion of the term 'homosexuality' into discourse by sexologists during the late 19th century, like the insertion of 'sex' itself, precipitated the development of reverse discourse. Rather than foreclosing the negotiation of meaning by indelibly fixing significations, the 'sexing' of discourse at this time achieved the opposite effect--a destabilization of the signifieds of terms like 'homosexuality' that provokes subsequent contests over definitions. Foucault elaborates the notion of reverse discourse by recording that, once homosexuality had been categorized, it "began to speak in its own behalf, to demand that its legitimacy or naturality be acknowledged, often in the same vocabulary, using the same categories by which it was medically disqualified" (101).

²⁶ Considerations of the ideological sphere in which the Canada Council operates have troubled its relationship with the province of Quebec and, ultimately, led to its institutionalizing of parallel sections that serve two entirely different constituencies defined not only by two languages but differing approaches to theatrical practice, a fact that I address in the final section of this essay. In her article on national cultural institutions, Joyce Zemans suggests that "Quebec politicians have often disparaged the arm's length model of arts funding" used by the Council, "arguing that it is an English creation and has no history or validity in French culture" ("Essential" 148).

²⁷ While government discourse invariably uses 'culture' to signify an elite notion of art consistent with Massey's idea of a 'public' educated in theatre and the fine arts, it regularly links 'culture' with 'communication,' as in the Ministry of Culture and Communications, for example. Thus its narrow use of the term frequently slips into the wider use common to Cultural Studies. This is appropriate given that 'cultural policy,' in Canada as everywhere else, always concerns the "representations, practices and experiences that [shape] people's lives" (Cruz and Lewis 10).

²⁸ Filewod notes that
the Massey Report equates cultural funding with national defense; in ponderous cold war logic the report introduces its

recommendations with the admonition that "we must strengthen those permanent institutions which give meaning to our unity and make us conscious of the best in our national life. [. . .] Our military defenses must be made secure; but our cultural defenses equally demand national attention; the two cannot be separated". ("National" 8)

Litt points out that the Massey Commission "confirmed [the CBC's] control of all broadcasting in Canada, including the emerging field of television [. . .] Canadian universities were to receive federal grants and national cultural institutions were to be given more money and attention" (379).

²⁹ Zemans considers that Canada provides a case study of the political and cultural objectives that lead a state to intervene in arts and culture. First among these, she writes, "is the establishment or reinforcement of national identity and the promotion of national unity. Joined to this is a policy of 'cultural defense,' prompted by the fear of 'cultural imperialism' which threatens national sovereignty" (*Where?* 13).

³⁰ Filewod elaborates on Massey's "anglomania" ("National" 7) in "Between Empires" by referring to Claud Bissell's exhaustive study, *The Young Vincent Massey* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1981). "Massey's nationalism was formed on the basis of a profound cultural allegiance to Great Britain," Filewod writes:

his deep loyalty to the monarchy and friendship with King George VI (who inducted him as a Companion of Honour in 1946), his close affiliations with Oxford, his service as High Commissioner to Britain, and his term as Governor General of Canada (the vice-regal representative of the crown) all attest to his abiding faith in British culture. (7)

³¹ In his entry on the Dominion Drama Festival published in *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre*, Herbert Whittaker documents that the first DDF was held in April 1933 in Ottawa in response to the initiatives of a small group of theatre enthusiasts who were brought together the previous October by the Earl of Bessborough, then the Governor General of Canada. Subsequently, the weeklong Festival was held annually in cities across Canada where amateur theatre productions that had won regional competitions gathered to vie in a variety of categories for prizes that were awarded by adjudicators drawn frequently from Britain or France. Whittaker writes that by 1970, "recognizing that the

Festival's original mandate was becoming irrelevant, the DDF was renamed Theatre Canada and [its] system of competition gave way to an emphasis on showcasing the country's best amateur groups" (145). Whittaker further records that "the astonishing growth of professional theatre in Canada in the 1960s and 1970s" (145) led to the demise of the enterprise in 1978. For a personal account of the DDF, see Betty Lee.

³² For a book-length study of the workers' theatre movement in Canada, see Toby Gordon Ryan.

³³ Whittaker also writes about this "political aspect" (*sic*) of the DDF, noting "its apparent nervousness about plays that seemed in any way to threaten the Festival's formality--the protocol, balls, and dinner parties that were an essential part of DDF Finals [. . .]" (145).

³⁴ See also Filewod, "Between."

³⁵ Provincial subsidy of arts and culture primarily follows the repositioning of these portfolios in the public sector by the federal government in the late 1950s. Although Saskatchewan established an arts council in 1948, it wasn't until the 1960s and 1970s that other provinces followed suit. In 1985, Anton Wagner notes that the budget for the Ontario Arts Council increased from \$300,000 in 1963 (the year of its inception) to \$21 million. "Collectively, the ten provinces allocate approximately \$975 million to culture," he writes; "The federal government's annual cultural budget exceeds \$1.5 billion, over half of which is allocated to operate the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation" (17). In her article on national cultural institutions, Zemans explains that the Quebec government "announced the creation of an arm's length [*sic*] arts council modelled after the Canada Council" in 1992 ("Essential" 148).

³⁶ Filewod implies as much when he notes that "In 1974 the terms 'native' and 'indigenous' meant 'Canadian' as opposed to British or American; by 1984 they had acquired a much more specific value (pertaining to aboriginal peoples) which challenged the very meaning of 'Canadian' as it was understood only a decade earlier" ("Between" 11). Instances of this ideology persist in the discourse of Canadian theatre criticism through the 1980s, which allows Filewod to repeat the point in his "Introduction" to *The CTR Anthology*, published in 1993 (xiii-xiv). In *Second Stage*, Renate Usmiani writes: "If there is a 'cause' common

to Canadian alternative theatre groups from coast to coast, it is this commitment to indigenous talent" (27) . In "Shifting Loyalties," an essay published in 1997, Don Perkins directly addresses the point by identifying two significations of the word as it is used in Canada. Near the beginning of his useful study, he explains that

Within the body of Canadian historical plays, "indigenous" has managed on occasion to mean both, in plays where the "indigenous," established North American or Canadian culture confronts an imperialistic "imported" culture arriving to "make something" out of this land, its resources or its aboriginal people. (151)

³⁷ I am indebted to Ed Nyman for this insight and for his recommendation that I consult Pease's essay.

³⁸ It is especially pertinent to quote Martin Kinch given that Toronto Free Theatre (TFT) provides the best example of the 'regionalization' of an 'alternate' theatre, which Filewod explains in "Between Empires." After noting that TFT was founded "as a radical company to present new works free of charge," Filewod explains that

by the end of the decade it was one of the largest of the new generation of theatres, with prices to match; by the end of the 1980s it had merged with its former nemesis, the bourgeois CentreStage (the mainstream tenant of the St Lawrence Centre) to form the Canadian Stage Company, one of the two largest civic theatres in the country. (10)

For fuller discussions of the evolution of Toronto theatres during the 1970s see Wallace (*Producing* 65-95); Usmiani (*Second* 22-65); and Johnston.

³⁹ After three decades of renting venues, the Factory Theatre bought its current venue at the corner of Bathurst and Richmond Streets in Toronto by assuming a hefty mortgage. With its acquisition of a permanent home, the four theatres that constituted the core of Toronto's 'alternate' theatre during the 1970s all came to own their own buildings which, while modest compared to their Regional cousins, include two performance venues as well as rehearsal and administrative space. It is interesting to contrast their current situation with the one that Jim Garrard, the founder of Theatre Passe Muraille, demanded for alternate theatre in the manifesto circulated in 1969 that I cited earlier.

"Theatre is event, not architecture."

It is not our intention to build yet another stage for actors and seats for audiences. Any one of the existing theatre buildings in Toronto could do that and does that. But none of them succeeds in creating the experience that ought to be and can be the theatre.

"We do not need buildings. We need a theatre whose main reason for being is the link between it and its audience." [. . .]

"The most appropriate name for our theatre would be Theatre Without Walls or more accurately Theatre Passe Muraille." (qtd in Rudakoff 251)

⁴⁰ A public survey commissioned by the Ontario government in 1983 corroborates this assertion for audiences in Ontario. "The attendance base for the performing arts has broadened since 1974, with a significantly higher proportion of Ontarians now attending live plays/musicals in the theatre (55% versus 42%)" (qtd in Wagner 17). Statistics from 1976 are more specific about the types of plays that audiences watched. Statistics Canada reports that during that year 56% of the home performances given had Canadian content, while this proportion was 72% for performances on tour. The plays were performed an average of 25 times. That is the supply situation. In the case of demand, however, performances of non-Canadian plays drew more playgoers per performance. This situation was particularly pronounced in Ontario, where the major companies staged a large number of home performances of non-Canadian plays (more than 70%) and played in houses with a capacity of more than 830 seats [ie., Regional Theatres]. On the other hand, small companies gave 730 home performances of Canadian plays and played in houses seating an average of only 250 persons [ie., alternate theatres]. (*Culture* 10)

⁴¹ The use of literary awards to establish notions of merit, quality and excellence is firmly established as a cultural value in Canada. For discussion of the use of awards in the processes of canonizations see the essays in Lecker, ed. In the case of theatre, the last two decades have seen a proliferation of awards for performance, as well as for writing. As a consequence, Ann Wilson can justifiably claim in an editorial for *CTR* 98 that "part of the value of a [theatrical] text is accrued by the rewards it receives" (3). *CTR* 51 (Summer 1987), which considers the topic of awards for Canadian theatre, includes articles that explain such 'city' awards as the Dora Mavor Moore awards in Toronto and the Jessie

Richardson awards in Vancouver. The entire issue of *CTR* 98 (Spring 1999) focuses on publishing Canadian theatre.

⁴² Filewod discusses the history of the Governor Generals' Awards in "The Hand that Feeds."

⁴³ The publication during the late-1980s and 1990s of other anthologies of Canadian plays substantiates this idea. In his "Introduction" to *The CTR Anthology* published in 1993, Filewod acknowledges problems posed by the earlier anthologies in a self-referential statement about his own anthology of plays published in *Canadian Theatre Review* from 1974-1990. He writes: "No longer can an editor of *CTR* write confidently, as could Rubin in 1974, of 'our culture,' because 'our' today implies a monolithic and hegemonic analysis that many of these plays resist" (xvi).

⁴⁴ Knowles' concept of 'canon' is more sophisticated than my comments suggest. In "Voices (off)" he writes:

the canon began to solidify, with the appearance in 1984-85 of three national anthologies; the 1989 publication of *The Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre*; the appearance in 1985 of a Canadian entry in the Longman Literature in English series with a chapter on drama; the publication in 1987 of an introduction to English-Canadian theatre by the editors of the *Oxford Companion*, and of a compilation by one of those editors of critical commentary on the anthologized plays; and the blossoming throughout the 1980s of courses and programs in universities across the country. (91)

⁴⁵ This elision is as common outside Quebec as the elision of 'Québécois' and 'national' is conventional inside that province. Given the obsession of federal governments for national unity, it is ironic that they continue to institutionalize the distinctions signified by these two terms in practices that construct theatre as the domain not only of two linguistic groups but of two distinct cultures as well. Differences between the regulations that the Union des artistes negotiates with Québécois theatre companies to govern rehearsal and performance in Quebec and those contracted by the Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA) with theatre companies across the rest of Canada determine different approaches to creation and production practice within the two cultures. The division of the theatre section of the

Canada Council into two parts along linguistic lines perpetuates these differences by recognizing them in official (federal) practice, as does the separation of the National Theatre School into two distinct 'streams,' a separation that the school's administration terms 'co-lingual' not 'bilingual.' Invariably, discussions of 'Canadian' theatre maintain this practice by distinguishing plays and productions created in French from those created in English, utilizing such oxymoronic constructions as "national anglophone" that I introduced in the previous section. Knowles, in other words, is not alone in his approach.

⁴⁶ My own comments on these anthologies, though written before Knowles' review, are remarkably similar. See "Constructing a Canon."

⁴⁷ Information about the founding of Native Earth Performing Arts is hard to document. In a telephone interview in March 1999, Carol Roundtree, general manager of the company, explained that while the company was founded in 1982, it only became incorporated as a not-for-profit company in 1983. At that time, she was elected president of its board of directors. Similarly, there is some confusion about the premiere dates of the company's production of Tomson Highway's *The Rez Sisters* whose success gave theatre by native people an enormous boost. Developed through a series of workshops from 1983-1985, this play about native women living on a fictional reservation premiered in Toronto in 1986 and subsequently toured Canada before travelling to Edinburgh. See the published volume for production history and notes.

⁴⁸ For discussion of 'ex-centric' theatre artists in Canada see Wallace (*Producing*). Knowles quotes Barbara Godard to explain his use of the term: "'excentricity implies many things--bizarre, fantastic, unconventional, incomprehensible, other--all subsumed by the concept of difference' and all potentially subversive of established modes and values" (Knowles 101).

⁴⁹ Autumn Angel Repertory Company had a brief life. It emerged in 1983 as an amalgamation of Theatre Autumn Leaf and Necessary Angel Company, only to disband again in 1984 when Richard Rose, artistic director of Necessary Angel, and Thom Sokoloski, artistic director of Theatre Autumn Leaf, decided to disentangle their companies in order to pursue different artistic directions. By this time, Autumn Angel had moved its administrative office(s) to a different building than those occupied by the Theatre Centre, and Necessary Angel had scored a

major hit with its production of *Tamara*, a stylish piece of environmental theatre that required its mobile audience to follow diverse characters and various narrative strands throughout the rooms and corridors of Toronto's Strachan House. This play, written by John Krizanc, went on to great success in productions subsequently mounted in Los Angeles and New York. For discussion of the early years of Necessary Angel, see Smith (38-39).

⁵⁰ For a full discussion of the evolution of Buddies in Bad Times Theatre and its changing priorities and status see my "Theorizing a Queer Theatre."

⁵¹ Scott's article provides a full discussion of the evolution of Nightwood Theatre from its inception to the present.

⁵² 'Small Theatre' has a specific meaning in Toronto theatre history which Paul Leonard explains in a program note for the 1992 version of *Summerworks*, an annual festival of work produced by many of Toronto's 'small' companies:

The word ['small'] refers to budget size (sometimes to house size), but that is all. At the Toronto Theatre Alliance [TTA], we consider a company to be small if its annual budget is less than \$250,000. Of course, most small theatres have a budget of much less than \$50,000. There is an ongoing debate in the community about the use of the word 'small' to describe itself. Some people argue pragmatically that, 'we *are* small, and we are not ashamed to admit it.' Others worry that the term 'small' somehow implies 'trivial' or 'unimportant.' I don't think small theatre is either of these things. (3)

'Small,' especially as Leonard defines it, becomes a useful substitution for 'alternative' in that it designates the new wave of theatres that succeeded Toronto's earlier 'alternates.' For further discussion of the work of Toronto's 'small theatres' in the late-1980s, see my "Survival Tactics."

⁵³ The founding members of The Theatre Centre now operate from offices located elsewhere in Toronto. Only Buddies has found a permanent performance venue by becoming the resident company of the 12 Alexander Theatre Project, the space formerly occupied by Toronto Workshop Productions that was bought by the City of Toronto and renovated in the early 1990s (see my "Theorizing a Queer Theatre.").

The Theatre Centre remains devoted to the creation and production of new and innovative theatre, providing many of Toronto's smallest companies and independent artists with one of the few venues available for subsidized experimentation. It continues to be managed by a board of directors composed mainly of artists.

⁵⁴ By this time, federal allocations to arts and culture had grown to \$1.5 billion, more than half of which went to support the CBC (Wagner 17).

⁵⁵ In 1997, Joyce Zemans quotes statistics published by the Canadian Conference of the Arts in 1994 to supply the latest available figures about the contribution to the Canadian economy of the 'arts and culture sector' which, by this time, frequently is figured as Canada's 'industrial industries' in government discourse (*Where?* 29 n6).

⁵⁶ See Wagner (18-19).

⁵⁷ A brief consideration of the current situation of theatre in Canada reveals the degree to which this infrastructure has matured. Theatre reviews appear regularly in the entertainment pages of Canada's daily and weekly newspapers, along with advertisements and previews for both new and long-running productions. Canadian magazines consistently feature stories about Canadian productions and performers, as do national television and radio networks. At least four academic journals focus exclusively on Canadian theatre, while other scholarly quarterlies regularly publish critical articles about Canadian plays. Academic organizations annually convene conferences about Canadian drama and theatre, providing scholarly parallels to the yearly meetings of such national organizations as the Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT), whose membership currently numbers 108 companies, the Associated Designers of Canada (ADC) which now includes 162 members, the Canadian Actors' Equity Association (CAEA) whose membership has grown to 5,000, and the Union des artistes, whose numbers also climb into the thousands. These service organizations, like the Playwrights Union of Canada (PUC) whose members currently total 350, and Le Centre d'essai des auteurs dramatiques (CEAD) contribute to the infrastructure of theatre in Canada that was unimagined in 1967 and which remained undeveloped in 1982. This infrastructure helps Canadian artists sustain their creative work by actively strategizing the development and support of their 'public'--audiences that increasingly recognize that theatre in Canada has

both imaginative and social dimensions. I must stress, however, that while much of this theatre utilizes Canadian plays produced by not-for-profit companies, the largest and most lucrative proportion of its audience attends the commercial production of imported fare--specifically, musical theatre that secures long runs and steady dividends for its investors.

⁵⁸The desire of a state to regulate the representations that organize subjects according to both nationality and gender leads Sedgwick to make an intriguing proposition:

just as every culture has *some* mechanism--different mechanisms--to constitute what Gayle Rubin refers to as a "sex/gender system," a way of negotiating back and forth between chromosomal sex and social gender, so every *modern* culture and person must be seen as partaking of what we might (albeit clumsily) call a "habitation/nation system." The "habitation/nation system" would be the set of discursive and institutional arrangements that mediate between the physical fact that each person inhabits, at a given time, a particular geographical space, and the far more abstract, sometimes even apparently unrelated organization of what has emerged since the late seventeenth century as her/his national identity, as signaled by, for instance, citizenship. (239)

Sedgwick's proposition reinforces my position in this essay by reiterating the importance of "the set of discursive and institutional arrangements" that mediate between physical facts and personal subjectivities.

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