

PERFORMED NEGOTIATIONS:

The Historical Significance of the Second Wave Alternate Theatre
in English Canada and Its Relationship to the Popular Tradition

by

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ABSTRACT

This doctoral project began in the early 1980s when I became involved in making a community theatre event on Salt Spring Island with a group of artists accomplished in disciplines other than theatre. The production was marked by an orientation toward creating **stage images** rather than a **literary text** and by the playful exploitation of **theatricality**. This experiment in theatrical performance challenged my received ideas about theatre and drama. As a result of this experience, I began to see differences in original, small-venue productions which were considered part of the English-Canadian **alternate** theatre scene. I determined that the practitioners who created these events could be considered a second generation to the Alternate Theatre Movement of the 70s and settled on identifying their practice as **Second Wave**.

The singular difficulty which Second Wave companies experience is their marginalization by **mainstream** theatre reviewers. These critics not only promote productions but also educate audiences and other theatre practitioners about theatre practice. Second Wave productions defy conventional descriptive categories which are founded on the assumption that theatre practice is the **interpretation of a literary drama**; thus they seem to fall short of their artistic potential. At issue here is the way we talk about theatre in English Canada: the conventions which authenticate our discourse and the implications of this discourse which makes material the three-way dynamic — **knowledge/power/practice** — as it pertains to our theatre institution and cultural value systems.

In this study, three Second Wave productions were selected as sample case studies. I recognized these theatre events as **different** because they employed performance practices from the **popular theatre tradition** to generate their plays. *Tears of a Dinosaur* (One Yellow Rabbit, Calgary) used

puppets; *Doctor Dapertutto* (Theatre Columbus, Toronto) used clowning techniques; and *Down North* (St. Ann's Bay Players, Cape Breton Island) used local folk performance conventions. In English-speaking theatre, popular traditions are trivialized; they are spoken of in derogatory terms as lesser forms or **entertainments**. Sometimes they are discursively constructed as **paratheatrical** or **outside** theatre.

I concluded that the Second Wave **negotiation** between the popular traditions and the conventional or literary paradigm for theatre as an art form is stylistically indicative of **postmodernism**. At the same time, this practice is politically subversive, a **postcolonial gest**, because the employment of paratheatrical traditions undermines discursive norms about English-Canadian theatre and thus destabilizes the dominant cultural narratives which sustain the hegemonic status quo.

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When I think of the theatre all things seem possible.

Roy Mitchell, *Creative Theatre*

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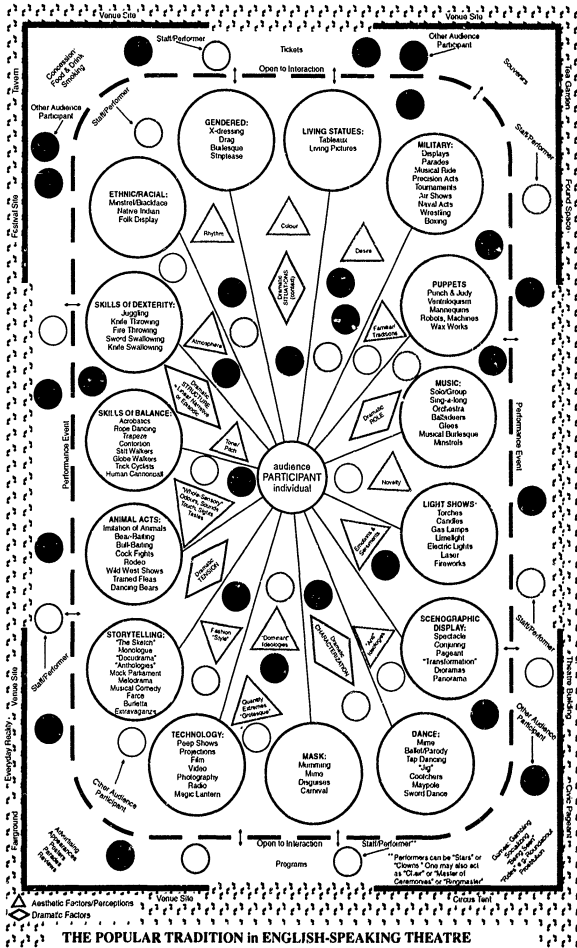
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DEDICATION

To the memory and spirit of my maternal grandmother,

MYRTLE McLAUGHLIN

a teacher, a mathematician and an artist
who taught me the joys of learning and colour



THE POPULAR TRADITION in ENGLISH-SPEAKING THEATRE

CHAPTER 1

THE NEGOTIATION: SETTING THE TABLE TO ACCOMMODATE DIFFERENCE

1.0 Is there a DRAMA in this THEATRE?

First-person narrative: a white woman's consciousness of pending misfortune blends with the telling of a Westcoast Indian legend; the latter is enacted in wildly-coloured costumes with animal and bird masks, designed without reference to Native style. A slide show of coastal scenic wonders is juxtaposed with photographed images of the human life cycle accompanied by taped rock music, loud and often dissonant while maintaining a hypnotic pulse. These performances are interspersed with a graceful black dancer as a white whale and the riotous improvised slapstick confrontation of an enlightened middle-class woman and her beer-swilling redneck husband from Nanaimo; the husband is played by a woman with little attempt at gender disguise. A voice-over from the taped public hearings which have been convened because of the presence of nuclear submarines in Nanoose Bay offers technical jargon laced with emotional rhetoric, distorted into abstract soundscapes around "S." The elongated "S" overlaps drumming which leads into group dances and winds around a cello-vocal duet that brings into view more slides. A clam sings a silly song of oceanic helplessness while the wife battles her beachbum husband in another improv, shouting over the confusion of more soundscape, more drumming, more slides, more dancing,

more music. Suddenly the animals break through the projected images, in a costumed frenzy, to dance wildly among the audience and lead everyone in a group sing-a-long of rage and dissension. Many acts braided together to create one theatrical event — a protest against the American submarines in the Canadian waters around Vancouver Island, British Columbia. No script exists for this play — only a soundscore, a few pieces of sheetmusic, some masks, an uninspiring videotape and personal memories.

* * *

The seeds for this doctoral study were planted in 1986 when I was involved in the above multidiscipline theatre production called *In Our Waters*. It was created by a collective of women artists, each accomplished in her respective area but wishing to explore the boundaries and conventions of her discipline along with performance. Their intent was to make theatre; few had had theatre experience, but most had heard about performance art and most had performed cabaret-style in our storefront performance space, Offcentre Stage. Those of us with experience in conventional theatre were uneasy when a performance date was set and no one was committed to writing a play. Instead it had been decided that each artist would develop her own theatrical response to the issue; she could work alone, within a group or with another performer. Starting with the

aesthetic conventions of her own artistic practice, each artist would explore the creative interplay with theatrical performance conventions. Eventually the individual performance projects would be brought together and collectively arranged into a theatre event.

My job was to talk about the production before it was actually complete. At first this was not difficult. I easily convinced members of the local Peace Group to provide us with seed money to help with production costs. Our common commitment to the issue as well as the past accomplishments of the individual company members spoke to the collective's intent and talent. The fact that the work had no identifiable form was not an issue; we were encouraged to take risks, to experiment.

Talking about the production and the process with the group was another matter, because my ideas about theatre and theatre aesthetics were a long way from what would finally come to be. Although this was **community theatre** and by implication **amateur**, I knew these women aspired to **professional standards** in all of their artistic endeavours. Yet, the first company rehearsal was not to take place until a week before opening night! I consoled myself with notions of the significance of a **rough and holy theatre**.

Talking about the work to representatives of peace organizations in communities where the production would tour was the greatest challenge of all. Even though I had participated in a full rehearsal and had modified my

worries about aesthetic standards, I could not come to terms with theatrical form. What do I call it? If I had said it was a **variety show**, I would have winced at the pejorative connotations. This was not **vaudeville** or **music-hall**; it was not made up of a sequence of isolated virtuoso turns. These labels could not do justice to the self-consciously **avant garde**¹ edge evident in the production. This edge was the result of what I saw as **disruptive** performance strategies.

What I was party to was the blatant and playful use of **theatricality** to mediate a serious political message, creating an emotionally charged and intellectually engaged dynamic that was above all **entertaining**. The message was there, loud and clear, but this was not **agitprop**, nor was it **guerilla** or **ritual theatre**. Nor was it elite **formalism** or inaccessible **Art Theatre**. What was disrupted by this **unconventional** process and product was *the theatre* itself and all my **conventional** thinking about it as process and product.

A problem from the outset was the question of the **dramatic action**: it would have been very straightforward if we had **written a play**. Where was the **plot** or even the **story** in *In Our Waters*? What could I identify as **characterization**? Even the **roles** floated freely as the woman who narrated the opening became the cello player and her vocalized part was taken over by the singer. Who was the hero/heroine? Sustained **identification** with any character was impossible. Although we certainly

recognized that we were all involved in the dramatic dilemma, no actual **antagonist** was represented on stage to carry the blame. Even the improvised scenes did not fall along lines of good and bad; both characters were presented unsympathetically, as if they were a pair of real-life clowns!

There was no attempt to create an **illusion of place**. The performers did not worry about framing the performance, masking their entrances, maintaining pictorial balance or proper sightlines. Their collective purpose was to get the audience involved through direct address, close proximity or by intermingling if necessary. During the course of the tour the territorial distinction between audience and performers progressively eroded as the women began to trust their performances as well as their material and each other.

Above all, what was difficult to isolate in this production was conventional **dramatic structure** because from the outset priority had been given to the mediating forms of theatre rather than literature. As the performance unfolded and the intermingling of the various acts built into a frenzy of music, colour and emotion, the pace mimicked the audio-visual confusion. Release came with the sudden crash of the birds and animals breaking through the screens. This moment was climactic and cathartic but it was not the result of an **agon** or **conflict**. There had been no debate, no combat. The antagonist never showed up. The protagonist was continually shifting. There was no resolution. What we experienced was the

orchestrated building of tension as the multiple elements were presented, layered and twisted until something had to give because we could not withstand the situation a moment longer! The battle/agon, between the community and their government was still to come but later, after the theatre event. The purpose of this **theatre enactment** was to alert society to the urgent dilemma and it succeeded. But was it **drama**?

1.1 Identifying Drama

We use drama to **tell ourselves stories about ourselves and our experiences** as people in our world. In theatre productions such as *In Our Waters* it is evident that **many stories** can be told around the same theme within one production. Each story represents a **different point of view**. In a conventional playscript, we are used to one point of view, one story which can be isolated and identified as the **drama**. This singular drama follows a **linear pattern of rising and falling action** built around the **dialectic** of a debate that progresses along a timeline. But in theatre productions such as *In Our Waters* the drama becomes problematic: our traditional categories for dramatic analysis fail to contain these events because they do not follow the linear pattern.

The etymology of the word **drama** indicates that drama represents **doing or an action**. Whenever the notion of **theatre** is contextualized by **literature**, we find that, following Aristotelian theory, **drama** is defined as

agon or **conflict**.² Yet, when we look at **performance**, we are often reluctant to see it as **theatre**, because we cannot find the agon or the dramatic conflict. Recent studies of circus³ and variety acts⁴ have demonstrated that there is a dramatic structure to nonliterary theatrical forms but that they do not always follow the pattern of a singular conflict/agon. They are episodic and represent many points of view; Brecht called this structure **epic**.

In order to identify drama in the context of performance, let us look at one of the most commonly used **theatrical** strategies, the **tableau vivant**, the living picture.⁵ We often think of tableau vivant as a formal staged picture or an allegorical living statue. Even in productions which employ slice-of-life Realism, however, actors in-role will often freeze in position to be discovered at the opening of the play or at the end in anticipation of a blackout. Obviously, the drama does not cease when the motion and words stop. The audience continues to read the drama through the staged image matrix by decoding the **juxtaposed**⁶ relationships between the various elements. The positions of the characters, their gestures, the lighting, the set and costume pieces, music and sound will contribute to the dramatic message. The drama is developed through the dynamic of **tension**, which is created by the meanings generated by the relationships between the various stage elements. While the image signs are constructed on stage, their meanings accumulate in serial progression. These dramatic meanings

may elude immediate intellectualization; often they are only felt as emotional impressions or desires while the tension builds and releases during the course of the enactment.

In *Teaching Drama*, Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton define **tension** as "mental excitement [which] is fundamental to intellectual and emotional engagement not only as a stimulus but as the bounding agent that sustains involvement in the dramatic task."⁷ There would be no drama without the element of tension and this tension may or may not develop into a full conflict/agon situation. Words which conventionally collect around drama and the dramatic situation are **exciting, gripping, sudden, tense**. The word **striking** appears in some dictionary definitions, usually associated with **vivid**. This is the only word which in the performative sense could be associated with the convention of dramatic conflict, but I think this is stretching the point.

When I am talking about performed drama, I like to use hockey as an analogy. The drama begins with the end-to-end rush and builds as the player stickhandles the puck with more or less dexterity. The dramatic tension increases in relation to the distance from the opponent's goal. The agon begins only when our player confronts the goalie eye-to-eye. The goalie is down. The player shoots and scores! The drama is over; we are released.

As we have seen, in the context of **drama in performance** the Aristotelian categories for drama can become irrelevant if there is no

literary process involved. This undermines the conventional ways we have talked about theatre in English Canada because we have valued the literary context for drama over the theatrical. By hanging onto this bias, our theatre practice remains inside a literary straight jacket. Unless we are prepared to question our thinking, we will continue to be blind to the historical significance of different theatre events because many utilize nonliterary traditions which are usually considered **paratheatrical**⁸ or **outside** the theatre.

1.2 Performing the Negotiation

As an actress and theatre facilitator as well as a student of theatre history and semiotics, it became apparent to me in the early 1980s that I was caught in a wave of alternate theatre practice which challenged my fundamental definitions of theatre and drama. This practice did not rely on a literary playscript. Theatre events were oriented around performance and spectacle: the marrying of stage images with ideas. In this doctoral study, I am interested in unravelling the historical significance of this newest wave of alternate English-Canadian theatre with its focus on theatrical performance rather than dramatic literature. I am especially interested in how this practice speaks to our colonial heritage with its roots in the larger context of English-speaking theatrical traditions.

English-Canadian theatre critics such as Robert Wallace have already placed this new alternate theatre practice in the context of **post-structuralism** and **postmodernism**.⁹ Can I, in my endeavour to learn more about English-Canadian theatre practice and its history ignore this gesture? Our **knowledge of theatre practice** is the product of the **definitions and descriptions** we apply to theatrical experiences. We cannot examine **changes in practice** without considering **how we talk about changes**. If our traditional understanding of theatre in English Canada is being challenged because of different practices, then what we say about our theatre must respond to these challenges to accommodate their difference. In this dissertation, I will be looking at historical narratives, and the construction of definitions and descriptions about theatre practices in the **English-speaking theatre tradition**, in order to open the discussion of the English-Canadian theatre to alternate narratives and vocabularies.

As an actress, my affinity to the performative begins with the name itself because I have been trained to identify acting with the performance of an action that is implied in every text. I have framed this dissertation around a **performative metaphor — a negotiation** — because I see this action as **the distinctive stylistic gesture of postmodern culture's activity**. For the reader not acquainted with an actor's textual analysis or **poststructuralist critical theory**, the idea of a **performative metaphor**, rather than a **literary metaphor**, may seem irregular and unfamiliar.¹⁰

The controversy around postmodernism rivals only that raised by the poststructuralist critic's unsettling strategy known as **deconstruction**. Poststructuralism is often seen as nihilistic and destructive; the postmodern is denigrated because it appears pretentious, subversive or, to those on the Left, apolitical. Both postmodernism and poststructuralism undermine the coherence of valued beliefs. These conflicts reflect the intrinsic importance of the issues under scrutiny and the scope of the epistemological territory under dispute.

These words and ideas often cause anxiety and disharmony because they signal a destabilization of the status quo. They represent a questioning of our belief in a **natural** and **necessary** order which lies outside and prior to all human constructions, including those using language and theatre. These words and ideas represent the employment of critical strategies which attempt to materialize **the social and psychological processes which we all use to define and describe phenomena in our world**.

By **processes**, I mean **ways of doing things** or the **how** which implies **technique** and **technologies**. These techniques include **information systems** or systems we use to **represent ourselves to ourselves through symbols or signs**.¹¹ Without these processes and the **conventions** we have established to employ these processes as **systems**, we could not begin to understand ourselves or our world. However, when we use these conventionalized systems, we are implicitly offering ourselves

reassurance that as human beings we can know **who we are** and **what our world is**. We also assume that by using these systems we can **control and contain this knowledge**.

In the everyday world, these social and psychological processes are **invisible** and their conventions are **unmarked**¹² because they have been **normalized** around such cognitive phrases as **common sense**. Common sense means that some experience and some knowledge is considered common or **universal** to all people. What is called into question by post-structural theory and postmodern practice is the **universalization** of experience and knowledge in the face of the reality of social **pluralism** and personal **difference**. This universalization masks the **political** fact that some experience and some knowledge, both representing a certain **value system**, has been given **priority and privilege** in society.

Questioning the normalizing conventions disturbs the space around this universalization by making the **formation of knowledge** problematic. Readers begin to experience **uncertainty** regarding long-held beliefs and value systems. A state of **tension** is generated around the site of this questioning that begs for cathartic release. We seek solutions — to **know** for certain — but no definitive answers are forthcoming. There is only the ongoing **dance of negotiation between conventional thought and unsettling questions** over already occupied epistemological territorial space.

1.3 The Dance of Negotiation: An Interlude

Sometimes when I am thinking about these issues I imagine an allegorical interlude in which characters named MISCHIEF (Post-modernism) and CHAOS (Deconstruction) cavort with SOMEBODY over a world-stage constructed out of a myriad of academic hoops and epistemological mazes, of political platforms and ideological soapboxes with the occasional flimsy ladder of success. All of these scenic components are equipped with trapdoors, slides and gigantic flexible springs. They are interconnected; they enclose SOMEBODY inside a webbing of information systems, a webbing which only appears to be a solid substance. This webbing provides SOMEBODY as well as the scene with what looks like structural definition. It fills all the space, inside and out, with a hazy network that must be continuously created, manipulated and maintained by SOMEBODY as it creates, manipulates and maintains SOMEBODY in return. This activity is the dramatic action and it is complicated by MISCHIEF's games and CHAOS' questions. Often, without reasons, the traps and slides eliminate an unsuspecting SOMEBODY, only to reveal another SOMEBODY. The springs allow a crafty SOMEBODY to make quantum jumps, up ladders or around traps.

ANYONE in the audience can follow the drama of a singular SOMEBODY. But, taking a pluralist perspective, ANYONE can also watch the many SOMEBODIES create a multiplicity of different patterns and

*relationships while they simultaneously enact their particular dramas. It soon becomes clear that every **SOMEBODY** is a theatrical transformation of **ANYONE**; the lines of demarcation between audience and stage become blurred in the playful **becoming** between **ANYONE** and **SOMEBODY**.*

*The tension builds with the constant random activity. The improvised play plays on. **ANYONE** in the audience anxiously anticipates the arrival of **RULE** and **ORDER** to contain the confusion and administer control. As yet, the ending is unknown and unpredictable.*

* * *

In this postmodern interlude, must we view the roles played by **MISCHIEF** and **CHAOS**, which embody the processes of gaming and questioning, as **negative** or **destructive**? Are we to consider their antics as **not serious** or **not authentic**? Will **RULE** and **ORDER** always provide solutions that are **constructive** and **positive**, more **truthful** and **appropriate**?

This study is about theatre events which have been contextualized and identified in relation to the challenges made by poststructural questioning and postmodern games. I believe we must enter this dance of negotiation even if the territorial points of reference are unfamiliar. What academic gains were ever made without risk? When we speak about post-

structural criticism, we speak in terms of employing critical questioning as a **process** or **strategy**. We will next consider how the strategy of critical questioning can **contribute** to our understanding of theatre: how we make theatre and how we talk about theatre in English Canada.

1.4 Methodology: Questioning as Strategy

Poststructural criticism provides us with strategies of critical questioning with one goal in mind: exploration for **creative** discovery. We use these strategies to **open our thinking** to include **different** possibilities. As I have said above (1.2), poststructural criticism questions **how we do things** (processes) so that we have a clearer understanding of **what we do** (products). Poststructuralism acknowledges that we get caught in traditional patterns of assumptions and conventions. Sometimes we need to jostle our thinking to accommodate different perspectives.

If, as theatre historians, we focus on **products**, we ask questions such as: **What** is theatre? **What** is drama? **When and where** did our theatre/drama begin? **Name** some theatre events. **What** categorizes them as theatre events or **when and where** did they happen? **Who** or **what** other events caused them to happen? **What** events did they influence? **What** aesthetic patterns do these events satisfy?

If, on the other hand, we ask about **process** we formulate questions such as: **How** did we get the idea that there was such a thing as the

theatre or drama? **How** did we decide when and where our theatre/drama began? **How** do we make theatre events? **How** can we make different theatre events? **How** do we determine which theatre events are significant?

As a theatre practitioner, I have always been interested in process questions, especially in how we **make** theatre but seem to have difficulty talking about theatre as process rather than product. Ronald Bryden in his preface to *Whittaker's Theatre* (1985) suggests that theatre is "the last most secretive of the craft guilds: it cherishes its 'mystery'....Acting is secrets.... The actor...must not let the audience know about how he achieves his effects, so that they can remain effective."¹³ It is amazing that we try to keep secrets when we have theatre schools to teach theatre practice, theatre critics who are expected to describe, evaluate and somehow set standards, and audiences who are expected to **read** our theatrical communication for meaning.

Perhaps Bryden's remark reflects the fact that our theatrical thinking is still caught in the theatre of illusion.¹⁴ The theatre of illusion is what we consider our **normal** theatre. It is a theatre event where what happens on stage is conceived in formal terms which indicate a closed and contained representation of a set of directives or **givens**. On stage these givens or references are presented as a unified **world** which corresponds to another possible reality. The illusion is not necessarily realistic or historically accurate but is total and plausible.

The theatrical conventions which unify the stage illusion and reinforce the impression of a contained and separate stage world are:

- *scenic perspective*, scaled relative to the size of human actors;
- a *dramatic narrative* in which the dialogue is reinforced by the audio-visual elements and is familiar or logical even when it presents its own set of natural laws;
- *characters* which focus the drama according to the storyline or offer support to the dramatic throughline; which are consistent and adhere to the rationale of one actor: one role: one character;
- *lighting* which reinforces the proportion and perspective as well as the spatial and temporal logic of the drama; and
- *audience and stage relationship* which is separate and distinct so that the audience sees the drama objectified as being of its own time and space.

Suspension of disbelief is dependent upon the unity of the theatrical illusion and the dramatic idea because, as theatre practitioners know, the stage "is always in constant danger of being exposed as the fraud it is."¹⁵

In the history of English-speaking theatre practice, have we *always* tried to create a theatre of illusion? Of course not. The conventions for theatrical presentation are to a degree always in flux depending upon cultural needs; if we study, for example, nineteenth-century theatre history, we become aware of the process and development of the conventions of Realism and Naturalism which served to reinforce the illusion of a contained stageworld by using stage properties and costumes, language and other verbal references that replicated real life.¹⁶

Conventions limit and structure theatrical process so that we have predictable theatre products. The historical development of conventions is easily forgotten. We are taught these conventions as if they were **natural laws**. They determine our theatre architecture, frame our theatrical expectations and influence how we spend our limited resources. When conventions are repeatedly reinscribed in what we say about theatre, so that these **rules** become **invisible assumptions**, we find it difficult to talk about theatre events which employ **different conventions**. We marginalize these **different** productions because they are **problematic**. They draw our attention to the rules. We often consider them aesthetically **inadequate** or, using a growth analogy, as developmentally immature, **experimental**.

My focus on **process** rather than on **product** as a research methodology, is not better, only **different**. It responds to a different way of thinking: process questions stimulate information about **becoming** products rather than **being** products. Within the context of becoming there is always room for doing something different, for choosing alternatives. Within this becoming, there is potential for change, for accommodating difference.

It is interesting to note that the generation of theatremakers who developed a second wave of alternate theatre in the 1980s were all introduced to theatre through the plays of Albee, Pinter and Beckett, and through the theories of Artaud and Brecht. In these plays, the illusion of reality on stage gave way to a rediscovery of obvious theatricality.¹⁷ To

these practitioners, the Living Theatre and other radical experiments were recorded history. In Canada, a category of theatres called "the Alternates"¹⁸ had been defined by critics such as Urjo Kareta; they had been funded and therefore given official status as practical entities with The Canada Council. Collective creation, *The Farm Show* and *Paper Wheat* were not just possibilities; they were theatrical facts. Yet, paradoxically, the critics and academics who make up the English-Canadian theatre institution/establishment were and are still describing the conventions of the theatre of illusion as **the norm**. The discourse about our theatre — how we talk about it — seems to resist changes that are evident in practice.

In my research, because I have experienced the same contradiction, I have placed conventional research methods and historical narratives under scrutiny. I have found we put limits on our thinking about **the theatre** in English Canada. There are practices and traditions which we do not consider **serious theatre**. We repeatedly place drama and theatre within the practical context of **writing or interpreting literature**. In this dissertation, I intend to question our thinking about theatre and drama; to strategically place theatre within the context of **performance**; and thereby to destabilize and mark the conventional assumptions which have bound and restricted our thinking about theatre in English Canada.

In talking about **making theatre events**, I have found that I am not only looking at our theatrical present but I am also examining our colonial

inheritance. Within our English-speaking heritage there are theatrical vocabularies and performance strategies such as clowning and puppetry which, while being familiar to us in terms of **performance events**, have been erased in our discussions about **the theatre**. The practices of a second wave of alternate theatre challenge us as historians to renegotiate the terms of our inheritance to include and accommodate theatrical difference which we witness today.

* * *

*In these academic negotiations, I find myself part of a postmodern / poststructural ANYONE striving to observe and articulate the experience of the multiple and transforming **SOMEBODIES**, using conventional procedures which traditionally have viewed only the singular and particular **SOMEBODY**. My methodology undermines academic norms just as my questions undermine theatre norms. I identify with the role of **CHAOS: MISCHIEF** is seductive.*

*Obviously, when this interlude began, **RULE** and **ORDER** were already on stage dancing with **MISCHIEF** and **CHAOS**. They were there as **CONVENTIONS** in disguise. They appear as repeated and reinforced patterns, marked as **STRUCTURE**.*

* * *

We get the answers to both product and process questions from textual accounts which we must interpret. These **texts** may be oral or written; they may contain pictures and diagrams. Poststructuralists such as Roland Barthes have broadened the meaning of text to include **all cultural products** because these structured products transmit **information** to us about ourselves.¹⁹ Without being fully aware of the process, we are continuously **reading** or **interpreting** cultural texts for information.

Because they are cultural products, we can include **theatrical performances** in this notion of text. Critics have also suggested that texts can be considered as **games** structured by **rules** or **information codes**.²⁰ Since the word **text** seems to give priority to a **literary** point of view and the historical alliance between **theatre and literature** is at issue in this study, I have found that the structural paradigm of game is more useful. Within the context of playing games, we can rethink the making of theatre and move toward opening our traditional definitions for theatre (1.6) and drama (1.1).²¹

1.5 The Process of Theatrical Gamemaking

In *The Act of Creation*, Arthur Koestler writes that "all coherent thinking is equivalent to playing a game according to a set of rules."²² **Playing out the game** entails employing a **strategy** or **strategies** which appear to the audience, observer or reader as **style**.²³ Within the context of

Koestler's game model, it is possible to think of cultural **products** as being the residue or result of playing out a game which began as a set of rules or instructions: a **game plan**. Examples of game plans are a blueprint, a recipe, a musical score, a model or a text which implicitly ask to be **played**: to be read or deciphered.

In artworks this set of rules, the game plan, constitutes the game's **aesthetics**. How we **interact** with a game plan determines the **game** that will be played. This interaction with the game plan is a **writing process**, although it is not necessarily a **literary process**.

In theatre a playscript is a plan for playing out a drama game using **stagecraft**; how the play is played out is the **theatrical style**. The drama game theatrically played before an audience will become the **theatre game or event**. If we have no prewritten script, then we will have to devise a process, a **poetics**, for developing a drama game plan. This poetics may be **literary or theatrical** depending on how we chose to write/wright the play. Writing directly on stage using theatrical poetics is called **improvisation**.

New games, including new artworks with **different** aesthetics, are created by a poetic interaction with the aesthetics of **already existing** games. This poetic interaction is constituted by the **choices** we make in relation to the aesthetics of the already existing game.

In Koestler's game model, the **set of rules** or **aesthetics** can also be seen as codes to be deciphered using vocabularies of information-bearing

signs and organizing conventions.²⁴ For every dramatist or playwright the game process can only begin using learned theatrical conventions and vocabularies of stage images which are familiar. The game will be limited by the coded rules, images and strategies which the gamemaker selects from a mental repertoire of known theatre game possibilities that I call the **theatrical imaginary**.²⁵ The gamemaker may experiment with, against, or around these conventions; but the already existing theatre game will always constitute the point of departure because it is recognized as **familiar, stable and normal**.

For example, if we understand that the conventions of Realism are normal, and we want to make a normal theatre event, we can devise a drama game along the theatrical rules of Realism. Our playing strategy would be to behave as if we were in a situation that could take place in the everyday world.

Perhaps, however, we wish to experiment and we have read about Japanese Noh. We can propose in our drama game plan to incorporate Noh strategies with the rules of Realism. We would play out our Realism game using Noh as a style, performing as if we were a Noh actor. This may be culturally interesting but would not alter the underlying conventions of Realism because our theatrical choices would be limited by the conventions of Realism.

We could, however, select from the two sets of conventions rules for a new game which would make for an intriguing Realism-Noh aesthetic. The game plan would provide many challenges for the production team. The actor may have to develop techniques for playing that would combine symbolic gesture from the Noh theatre with the subtleties of psychological nuance. The end result would be a unique blend of the familiar (Realism) and the different (Noh).

Koestler calls this process of devising new games **bisociation**.²⁶ He contends that bisociation, the interplay of two sets of rules, is the key to all **creative acts**. If the postmodern era is to be considered as the site of new and unique cultural activity, then we should be able to identify sets of rules or conventions which are at play in postmodern theatre games.

In rethinking theatre events as games, I admit I have disturbed our traditional assumptions about the seriousness of aesthetic activities. This is especially disquieting because of all the arts, theatre seems to be of marginal importance in English Canada: to question our theory and practice seems almost sacrilegious. Within the English-Canadian theatre institution, theatre historically has found validation when the making of the drama game is considered the jurisdiction of a dramatic author and, therefore, is contextualized within the cultural field of literature. When it is aligned with literature, theatre can be considered a serious aesthetic practice.

Because we are used to beginning the theatre game with a prewritten script, the process of devising a game plan is usually viewed as separate and distinct from the process of making the theatre event. If, however, we raise questions about making drama games using theatrical poetics or improvisation, then we begin to undermine the stability of the literary dominion over the theatre game plan and can view the event in terms of **performance**. In this study, I have raised the possibility of a theatrical poetics rather than a literary poetics for the making of drama because I believe that by giving priority to the **performance** of drama rather than its **literary** construction we can begin to think about theatre differently.

1.6 Rethinking the Definition of Theatre as Communication

As we have seen above, process questions involve us in issues of the use of technologies (1.2). Harold Innis demonstrated that all technologies are basically information systems; they involve us in **reading/interpreting** and **writing/communicating** processes, or if we use **communication** idiom, in **decoding** and **coding**.²⁷ The order is significant because we learn to read the code before we can use it; that is, we learn to read before we write.

When we use any code, we consciously and unconsciously choose from our mental bank of **learned signs** and their **conventional uses**. Most of these signs have **no natural reference**; they are **symbolic**.²⁸ Words are

examples of symbolic signs. The meaning generated by symbolic signs is **socially determined** and subject to conventions, although we may also accumulate personal symbols with significances that are known only to ourselves. Learned recognition of symbols and their meanings is the result of repetitive exposure to signs until they become familiar concepts.

In the context of the **social process of communication**, we now are able to think of **theatre** as a **coded information system**. The symbolic signs used in theatre, and in film and TV, are kinetic **images**. Theatre images, however, unlike film and TV images, are **performed live** which means that as signs they are phenomenologically **present** before an audience while their referent is **absent**. This characteristic of **simultaneous presence and absence** is unique to theatre signs and accounts for their ability to **transform in meaning without changing substance**.²⁹

Theatre images are constituted through many **coded subsystems** such as gesture, costume, words, spatial relationships, lighting, sets, sound, and so on. Theatrical subsystems transmit information through **audio-visual channels**. These images are **matrices of information**; they are characteristically **complex** or sign **clusters**. For the purposes of this dissertation, the definition for theatre will be formulated as *a symbolic representation using performed audio-visual image clusters*.

This definition which focusses on the theatre's function as an information medium (i.e., as a system of representation), allows us to designate a different conceptual territory around *theatre* and its practice. This *theatre* is inclusive rather than exclusive and gives priority to performance using stage images rather than to writing in word signs.

I am tempted to say that the **content** of theatre, as a **form**, is **drama** but it is important to remember McLuhan's aphorism: The medium is [also] the message. The medium/form makes its own message/content which we can study as **rhetorical effects** or how we make and have made meaning through our use of signs. The effects of theatrical communication have always been of concern to theatre practitioners.³⁰ The importance of rhetorical effect in theatre practice is the core of theatre criticism unless we are analyzing the particulars of the drama according to literary categories such as plot and character, theme or genre.

Historically, theatrical enactment has been used as a means of social communication for learning about life. As performers, we show the social mores and personal behaviours of a particular community by telling our stories dramatically. As audience, we may feel we are not a part of that portrayed community but it is still possible for us to understand what issues are of social concern through the persuasion of theatre effects.³¹

Until the nineteenth century, theatre was the foremost **mass media** system. With general literacy, the pulp press and then the advent of

electronic technologies such as radio, film and TV, theatre has become marginalized as a communication system. Instead, we prefer to think of theatre in the context of **art** and **culture** and veil it in the Romantic mystery of creative genius.

The **message** of this coded communication is **drama**. In English Canada, we tend to collapse theatre into drama; we often call theatre a **dramatic art**. Other dramatic arts are radio plays, TV series, films and the literary genres conventionally oriented by the classifications of tragedy and comedy. The common context for all dramatic arts then becomes the play-script. This context does not consider the **different** ways drama is **mediated**.

Drama is the message/content of theatrical enactment, but it is also a **formal system** for mentally organizing experience. Drama allows us to give **structured reality** to the ephemeral in everyday life so that we can make meaning. As a way of organizing or ordering experience drama is culturally pervasive; this is evident because of the many ways in which we mediate experience through the various dramatic arts. We do not need TV or theatre to think of life as a drama. In fact, as Northrop Frye tells us in the *Anatomy of Criticism*, drama is one of the oldest formal structuring processes we know.³² We find dramatic structure familiar and we can identify an experience as drama when we mark the points of tension.

1.7 Making Different Theatre Games

We have seen that all theatre games begin with an already existing set of rules or conventions. For playwrights, these sets of rules will depend on their mental theatre game repertoire (their theatrical imaginary), their experience and knowledge of how theatre games are socially sanctioned, as well as their personal evaluation of specific events. To playwrights, some theatre games will be considered **more important** than others, although **individual preferences** may not always coincide with those theatre games that are **valued by the theatre institution**.

The theatre institution is made up of critics, academics, the funding organizations and their juries as well as those who make theatre events. These are the people who give **status** to theatre games by designating which practices and products are worthy of serious consideration and support. Through descriptions and definitions of the practices and products generated within the institution, the **norm** for theatre or what is called **the theatre**, is established.

The collected body of definitions and descriptions is formally called theatrical **discourse**.³³ Theatrical discourse is like an **economy** because as a system for circulating information and knowledge, it symbiotically maintains the theatre institution. Discourse gives the institution structure and identity while the discourse, itself, is fed by and limited by the theatre institution and its practices. As well, the institution sanctions what it wants

to know about theatre as well as the **discursive rules, conventions and vocabularies** pertaining to theatre which will be relevant to English-Canadian practice.

As is the case for all cultural practices, the theatrical norm (**the theatre**) is socially determined. The institutional norm represents certain theatrical practices which are sanctioned by the theatre institution; our knowledge of the approved norm is **invisibly** inscribed in the institution's discourse as **universal** and **natural**. Implicit within this approved theatre practice and its discourse is a **certain value system** which is directly linked to a **dominant ideology**.

The structural pattern created by the theatrical norm as it relates to all possible theatre practices is described in political terms as a **hegemony**. Hegemonic structures are **hierarchical** social arrangements which appear stable and oppressive on paper. Hegemony is determined by the **political control** one group holds over another; this controlling power reinforces the hierarchy.

It is recognized that the survival of any socio-cultural institution like theatre depends on external social order as well as our willingness as individuals to participate in hegemonic strategies and to uphold determined norms. Outright revolution results in chaos and confusion that would disrupt all theatre practice. On the other hand, oppressive order and

totalitarian control is exclusive as well as elitist in the extreme and is equally unbearable and counterproductive.

In everyday life, the theatre institution is primarily made up of individuals who do not always identify with the institutional power-centre. These individuals view their position in terms of the shifting dynamic between their own theatre work and the hegemonic norm. If theatre practitioners wish to be taken seriously by the institution, to be approved for funding or published, they know their personal interests must **comply** with those of the dominant group. They also know that **resistance**, employed selectively and performed as a **negotiation**, is possible. People are not absolutely helpless within the hegemonic system; the sanctions and limits of the theatre institution can always be tested. Because theatrical norms are maintained by people, these rules are more flexible than we sometimes believe. Disagreement and differences can always be incorporated into practice by demonstrating concretely a variety of theatrical possibilities and alternatives. It is always possible for theatre practitioners to choose **alternate theatre strategies** which resist conforming to the theatrical norm, although there is the risk that the institution may not take these practices seriously. If the theatre institution agrees to accommodate these alternatives, strategic resistance can actually help to change the definition of sanctioned (normal) theatre.

When the playwrights' repertoire of known theatre games is limited to those of the dominant norm, the sets of rules from which they develop their productions will be limited. Often playwrights decide that their goal for producing new theatre games is to expand their theatrical imaginary through research and experimentation. By employing the strategy of hegemonic resistance, playwrights can enter into negotiations with the sanctioned aesthetic and poetic practices. Theatre gamemaking which explores new game possibilities using aesthetic and poetic choices that **resist the theatrical norm** will result in what we call **alternate theatre events**.

The territory of the **dominating cultural norm** is known as the **establishment**. The theatre establishment is characterized by its ability to access the theatre institution's resources: money, talent, production facilities and audiences (the means to realizing the theatre event), as well as criticism and analysis (the means of giving cultural significance and status to the same event).

If there is material reality to the metaphor of the **mainstream**, it is with reference to the **flow of resources** that are allowed to circulate relatively unhampered within the institution/establishment economy. The theatre events which fall under the establishment's cultural umbrella will be determined by who has gained access to the most resources. In a society such as ours which measures value in terms of money then it becomes

apparent that there is a relationship between following the conventional rules and funding. The **rate of flow of resources** will be in direct proportion to the perceived **similarity** between the proposed theatre event and those **familiar** events which are **recognized** and which adhere to the establishment's **norm**.³⁴ These events satisfy and become part of the establishment's theatre game repertoire. Gaining access to larger portions of the institution's resources, both private and public, is a matter of being sanctioned and recognized in the eyes of the establishment.

The establishment is subsumed within the institution and given privileged status because it is the site of power and money. At the same time, the establishment and the theatre institution are not always in total agreement, as is evident in the institution's ambivalent reaction to successful megamusicals such as *The Phantom of the Opera* and *Cats*.

Within the discourse of the theatre institution, there is a tendency toward the classification of **all** theatre practices, whether or not they are sanctioned by the establishment. Those theatre events which occur as a result of producing theatre and drama games using aesthetic and poetic practices which **differ** from the institution/establishment norm are called **alternate** by the institution. Those theatre events which **cannot be accommodated within** the definition for normal theatre are designated by the institution as **paratheatrical**. As we will see, all paratheatrical events are

alternate (different) while all alternate events are not necessarily para (outside) the theatre.

If the theatre institution/establishment defines theatre practice as an **interpretive art**, which makes the theatrical communication process **secondary to literary poesis**, then gaining access to theatre resources will depend on producing a **literary drama** first. Playmakers interested in developing an alternate aesthetic while remaining in close proximity to the institution/establishment resource base will be limited to developing drama games which continue to satisfy traditional literary poetics. This does not preclude them from experimentation within the literary form or from theatrical workshopping with actors as long as they produce a verbal text. The discourse which will be generated around this alternate practice will extend the aesthetic conventions for literature into the context of theatrical performance.

If, however, alternate practitioners view **dramatic enactment in audio-visual stage images**, as a **primary writing practice** with its own theatrical traditions, conventions and vocabularies, as well as its own range of representational possibilities, then a literary drama will become irrelevant to the theatremaking process. These practitioners will develop alternate poetics for the drama game which will be theatrical rather than literary, and will begin with on-stage **improvisation**. Not only actors but possibly designers, musicians, technicians, dancers, puppeteers, mask-

makers, writers, audience members will be utilized in this improvisational process. Of course, playwrights who follow this creative method run the risk of not being taken seriously or validated by the institution/establishment because their practice falls outside the sanctioned parameters of the norm.

Following alternate processes does not mean that playwrights cannot produce their theatre events; only that these events will pose a problem for the institution. The **discourse** about these events will be a material extension of their occurrence and will project **theatrical difference** into the realm of definition and description. The institution will have difficulty coming to terms with these events. The critic may choose either to dismiss the event as insignificant or decide that it is impossible to discuss it. Or the critic can try to speak about the event as if it conformed to the normal conventions for drama and theatre. It is also possible that the critic will attempt to **mark** the difference by constructing alternate narratives with many authoritative references or by using ambiguous categories such as **performance art** or **image theatre**.

As I found during my involvement with the production *In Our Waters*, when theatrical norms are challenged the institution is implicitly being asked to re-examine and modify its conventional assumptions about theatre. The norms are being tested. Often to expedite the discourse, we find it necessary to invent vocabularies and frames of reference like image theatre or performance art to designate the differences we have experienced. I

believe, however, that these terms allow us to sidestep the real questions raised by new theatre games. These questions challenge naturalized definitions, values, privileges as well as the narratives which contextualize our performance traditions in a theatre history.

In this dissertation I will develop the argument that English-Canadian postmodern playmakers, in expanding their repertoire of theatre games, have borrowed sets of conventions from outside the institution/establishment's norm, from traditions that belong to the **paratheatrical**, which I identify as the **nonliterary popular tradition**. Employing these **outside** traditions undermines the stability of those sanctioned traditions **inside** the theatre because the theatrical poetics of the paratheatrical/popular tradition question the domain of literary poetics which are valued by the institution/establishment. Through the interplay of the literary and the popular traditions in **bisociative interaction**, new and different — **postmodern** — theatre games are being created in the English-Canadian theatre.

ENDNOTES

¹ At the time I was reading in *The Drama Review* about postmodern theatre experiments in New York and Europe which were not generated from a playscript and were being referred to as **image theatre**. In *The End of Humanism* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982), this kind of theatre practice prompted Richard Schechner to react by proclaiming the end of the theatrical avant garde. His view is not shared by all critics; see Bonnie Marranca, *Theatrewritings* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1984).

² *The Norton Introduction to Literature*, Carl E. Bain, Jerome Beaty and J. Paul Hunter (Eds.) (New York: Norton, 1973), p. 738, and Northrop Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1957), p. 286.

³ Paul Bouissac, *Circus and Culture* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1976).

⁴ Bernard Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation: Performer, Audience, Act* (New York: Routledge, 1990).

⁵ Some theatre historians leave us with the impression that the use of tableaux vivants as a theatrical strategy for dramatic enactment has a clear historical origin. See Tracy Davis, *Actresses as Working Women* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 124. In her text, Davis cites the research of Jack W. McCullough and the specialized use at "the Comedie Italienne in 1761." The specificity of this historical moment becomes problematic when one considers Christian enactments of the crucifixion, medieval street pageants or Inigo Jones's masques. No doubt Davis was considering a narrower performance context, although it is left unstated in her text.

⁶ **Juxtaposition** is the placing of elements in side-by-side relationships without concern for linear sequencing or logical connection. The perception of the whole is of a matrix or mosaic-like pattern of interrelationships among individual units. Meaning is generated through processes of association rather than conventional linear exposition. The work is therefore usually ambiguous and open to interpretation or even to misinterpretation as well as the cultural production of many significances. I have developed this definition using concepts from *The Banquet Years*, in which Roger Shattuck writes that "the twentieth-century has addressed itself to the arts of juxtaposition as opposed to earlier arts of transition," rev. ed. (New York: Vintage Books, 1968), p. 332.

⁷ Norah Morgan and Juliana Saxton, *Teaching Drama* (London: Hutchinson, 1987), p. 3. Martin Esslin in *The Field of Drama* (London: Methuen, 1987) states: "the elements of heightened intensity of incident and emotion are one of the essential ingredients of drama"; another is the simulated "enactment of events" (p. 24), the action or doing.

⁸ Alan Filewod, "The Theatre Outside the Theatre," editorial from the "Paratheatre in Popular Culture" issue, *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1989), p. 3. Theatre events covered in this issue are circus, medicine show, traditional Yiddish wedding jesting, street theatre using giant puppets in parade, seasonal parades in Toronto as carnival events, carnival events at the Edmonton Fringe Festival, drag queen masquerade. It is significant that these events are contextualized by **popular** culture and that they all belong to theatrical traditions which are identified as "outside the theatre." They are all nonliterary.

⁹ Robert Wallace, *Producing Marginality: Theatre Criticism in Canada* (Saskatoon: Fifth House Publishers, 1990). A new Canadian theatre journal *Theatrum* also began publication in response to this new wave of alternate practice. Since its first issue in April 1985, the editors have succeeded in establishing the journal's credibility and *Theatrum* is now widely read and cited.

¹⁰ See Jacques Derrida, *Limited Inc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 1988); Stephen Scobie, *Alias Bob Dylan* (Red Deer, Alberta: Red Deer College Press, 1991); and Tania Modelski, *Feminism Without Women: Culture and Criticism in a "Postfeminist" Age* (New York: Routledge, 1991) on the **performative** in poststructural criticism. Because I am familiar with Stanislavsky's **method** for analyzing dramatic dialogue to determine the **action** which is to be played, I understand how this interpretive strategy can empower the reader to think beyond the identification of the author's intent. As an actress, I must play the action as I read it. Of course, if the author is present we may disagree. The performative also empowers me as speaker/writer to **play the action** of speaker/writer as if I were in-role as an **expert**; I speak through assumed authority as **author**.

¹¹ My interpretation of **process** has been influenced by Ursula Franklin, *The Real World of Technology* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1990).

¹² The concept of the **unmarked** also comes from poststructural criticism. See Peggy Phelan, *Unmarked: The Politics of Performance* (London: Routledge, 1993). We can think of the **marked** semiotically in the way that dark skin colour marks a person as racially **other**, in which case the racial politics are made **visible** by skin colour. What is usually

unmarked in terms of racial politics is the assumption that the **universal** we is white. If we were to acknowledge racial pluralism, we would mark **our** particular experience and **our** knowledge as different. That is, we would qualify, in terms of race, our experience and present the knowledge as relative. If we consider processes as natural rather than conventional, then processes are left unmarked. The politics around what is **normal** are usually unmarked unless the writer finds herself outside the conventional norms. This is the case in gender and sexually-oriented criticism. The writer can perform her role as **other** by marking her text with signs that indicate her experience as **other**. These issues are all concerns addressed in poststructural criticism.

¹³ Edited by Ronald Bryden with Boyd Neil, *Whittaker's Theatre: A Critic Looks at Stages in Canada and Thereabouts 1944-1975* (Toronto: Whittaker Project, University of Toronto Press, 1985), p. xiv.

¹⁴ I take this notion of theatre of illusion from Harold Clurman, *Lies Like Truth* (New York: Grove Press, 1958) and its aesthetics are described in Theodore Shank, *The Art of Dramatic Art* (Berkeley: Dickinson, 1969). The theatre of illusion is reinforced by the modernist ideal of the transcendent unity and in practice satisfies both Realism and Expressionism or Abstraction. In poststructural studies, the "theatre of illusion" is referred to as the "theatre of representation." See Derrida, *Writing and Difference*, trans. Alan Bass (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1978).

¹⁵ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1600: Volume One 1300 to 1576*, 3rd ed. (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 151.

¹⁶ Michael Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991) and Martin Meisel, *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1983).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of the Theatre and Social Life* (London: Harper and Row, 1972).

¹⁸ The term "Alternates" has been my choice for the purpose of this study. The other term "Alternative Theatre" has been used by others and perhaps there is international precedent for choosing "alternative" over "alternate." I take as my referential authority Robert Wallace (pp. 66-68), who quotes a 1979 article by Ken Gass, a theatre practitioner who was intimately involved in the development of the movement in English Canada in the 1970s. Gass's discussion about the use of the label "Alternate" and its

accuracy in describing the work of some theatre companies in Toronto is often pointed to as germane to our understanding of the process of validation by critics and funding bodies.

Recent texts by academics Denis Johnston and Renate Usmiani have favoured the "Alternative" label. I would suspect that their strategy was to place the English-Canadian experience under the larger international umbrella of the Alternative Theatre Movement of the 1960s. I personally subscribe to Wallace's terminology because I associate "alternate" with discursive "otherness" and "difference" in its binary relationship to "mainstream" or "establishment" theatre and this is relevant in the context of this study. The *Oxford Dictionary* indicates that the words can be used interchangeably and I think there is value in designating that there was a clear difference in English-Canadian experience that distinguishes our theatrical history and our institutionalized practices. This difference is certainly marked in Johnston's text *Up the Mainstream: The Rise of Toronto's Alternative Theatres, 1968-1975* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), as well as Usmiani's *Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada* (Vancouver: University of British Columbia Press, 1983).

¹⁹ Roland Barthes, "From Work to Text" (1971), *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), pp. 56-64. For an analysis of cultural products as texts, see also Barthes, *Mythologies*, trans. Annette Lavers (London: Collins, 1972). From the point of view of theatre as **performance text**, see Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 3.

²⁰ Arthur Koestler, *The Act of Creation* (London: Hutchinson, 1964), p. 39. For poststructuralist criticism contextualized by game theory, see Shirley Neuman and Robert Wilson, "Game," in *Labyrinths of Voice: Conversations with Robert Kroetsch* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1982), pp. 47-83.

²¹ Historically, thinking about theatre as a game is not new to English-speaking theatre. Up to the Renaissance, theatre events were referred to as *ludi*. See Glynn Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, 3rd ed. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

²² Koestler, p. 39.

²³ Susan Sontag, "On Style," in *A Susan Sontag Reader* (New York: Random House, 1983), p. 152.

²⁴ Koestler, pp. 41-42.

²⁵ Familiar theatrical images and conventions are stored in what I call the **theatrical imaginary**. The **Imaginary** is a psychological realm for the perception of experience first conceptualized by the French psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan. See Wolfgang Iser, *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993).

²⁶ Koestler, pp. 35-38.

²⁷ The relationship between technology and information systems is developed in Ursula Franklin's text. The research of Harold Innis, *The Bias of Communication* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1951) has been re-examined by Arthur Kroker, *Technology and the Canadian Mind: Innis/McLuhan/Grant* (Montreal: New World Perspectives, 1984). That technologies are information systems to be decoded was Marshall McLuhan's principal thesis in *Understanding Media: The Extensions of Man* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1964). Relevant to this doctoral study and my use of the game model is McLuhan's chapter "Games: The Extensions of Man," pp. 207-16.

²⁸ The use of the word "symbolic" comes from the study of theatre semiotics. Texts on the subject used in this research include: Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*; Patrice Pavis, *Languages of the Stage: Essays in the Semiology of Theatre* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1982); Esslin, *The Field of Drama*; Marvin Carlson, *Theatre Semiotics: Signs of Life* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1990); and Jean Alter, *A Socio-semiotic Theory of the Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1990).

²⁹ Jindrich Honzl, "Dynamics of the Sign in the Theatre (1940)," in *Semiotics of Art*, Ladislav Matejka and Irwin R. Titunik (Eds.) (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1976), pp. 74-93. "It is the changeability of the theatrical sign that [is] the main difficulty of defining theatrical art" (p. 85).

³⁰ "The essence of theatre lies in the impression made on the audience by the manner in which you perform....If to gain effect the individual modifies his manner, or his voice, or his appearance, from the normal as he addresses the crowd, then an element of theatre has entered." Richard Southern, *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (London: Faber and Faber, 1962), pp. 26-28.

³¹ For the past twenty years educators have been reassessing the use of **drama as a process for learning**. Instead of concentrating on the products of drama or theatrical productions, drama educators are recognizing that it is possible to use drama as a teaching strategy. In the context of theatre history, I am not alone in contextualizing theatre in terms of

communication, although the focus is usually on theatre as **propaganda or moral instruction**. For example, Joseph Roach, "Theatre History and the Ideology of the Aesthetic," *Theatre Journal*, 41(2), (May 1989), pp. 155-168 and Meisel, *Realizations*. See also Esslin, *The Field of Drama*.

Feminist critics frequently mark the ideological forces which are inscribed in the theatrical event. Theatrically inscribed ideology is not a "simple mimetic reflection, but a force that participates in creating and maintaining social arrangements." That is, theatrical communication teaches people about their social place. Jill Dolan, *The Feminist Spectator as Critic* (Ann Arbor: UMI Research Press, 1988), p. 16.

³² Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 246.

³³ In Chapter 4, I will be considering the dynamics of discourse, how we talk about theatre and structure our ideas about theatre practice in detail. For a definition of discourse see below: Section 4.2, footnote #13.

³⁴ I have not addressed aesthetic standards in terms of artistic merit here because the measure of "quality" as "art" is directly related to the perceived merits of the game plan. The subjective standards which measure merit are objectified by comparing new games to historical precedents and other events within an international context. All of these quantitative and qualitative measures are rooted in agreed upon hegemonic norms.

CHAPTER 2

**PROCESS IN NEGOTIATIONS WITH PRODUCT:
INTERROGATING ENGLISH-CANADIAN THEATRE HISTORY**

2.0 Questioning Historical Narratives: How Have We Constructed Our Theatrical Past?

My questions about our theatre history are not raised out of a desire to negate everything that the English-Canadian theatre institution has achieved to date; but rather, because I perceive a need to chart uncharted or forgotten territory. When we perform as traditional theatre historians, we examine theatre events, plays, actors, directors, aesthetic movements, and other theatre products. We do not consider that the theatrical *how* or process is as important as the *what, where, when* and *who*, or product. Of course, in theatre practice, the concerns of those who are **trying to do something different** are always focussed on concerns of **process** as well as **product**. Raising issues around the process of making drama tends to destabilize the conventional poetics of the establishment theatre. When playwrights choose to explore theatrical poetics rather than literary poetics, this strategy leads to marginalization by the theatre institution.

Sometimes, as we find in the instance of the Alternate Theatre Movement in the 1970s, a theatrical poetic such as **collective creation** can be subsumed within the literary poetic if the playwright/author function is assigned to the director or if the collective is identified as transcending its plurality and operating as a **universal we**.¹ This discursive strategy

temporarily neutralizes questions about authorship. In theory, conventions which allow us to think of theatre as an interpretation of literature remain intact, while in practice they become problematic. When an overtly theatrical process is neutralized so that it discursively conforms with this norm, the institution/establishment is able to sanction different poetics such as collective creation. Because it is made to conform to literary criteria, the collective process can be viewed as a positive contributor to the English-Canadian dramatic canon.

Historically, English Canadians have not given much credence to those who experiment with the process of making theatre. Few Canadians are familiar with the theatrical explorations of Roy Mitchell at Hart House Theatre, University of Toronto, 1919-1922² or those conducted by Carroll Aikins in Naramata, British Columbia, 1920-1922.³ Both followed the modernist ideals of the international Art Theatre Movement and presented **different** theatre events. Their concerns were theatrical rather than literary; they were not particularly interested in developing Canadian drama. Instead, they offered Canadian audiences an **alternate Little Theatre aesthetic**, an alternative to the tawdry nineteenth-century Realism which was standard fare for British and American **commercial** touring companies.

Roy Mitchell also influenced Herman Voaden, another explorer in theatrical process. Voaden searched for ways to create imaginative dramatic

worlds on stage through the synthesis of sound, music, light and movement, as well as words. Voaden's work has generally been marginalized by theatre historians. It has been said that his dramas are derivative and poor imitations of European Expressionism or American plays by Eugene O'Neill.⁴ Because Voaden was interested in innovation and process, he always spoke openly about his influences; his candour left him vulnerable to critics who believed in the Romantic purity of inspired genius. Voaden's plays posed a difficulty for critics: it was perceived that they lacked conflict or **drama**. Although he studied playwriting under George Pierce Baker at Yale and went on to teach English, like Mitchell and Aikins before him, Voaden's interests lay in creating a **theatrical event rather than a literary text**. As **performed drama**, his plays resembled musical orchestrations; hence, he coined the term **symphonic expressionism** to describe them. The drama in Voaden's theatre does not follow the conventions of the literary **agon**; but rather, as its affinity to music suggests, is constructed on the more abstract and emotional patterns of **tension** (1.1).⁵

During the early Depression years, at the same time as Herman Voaden was feeling the sting of rejection by the Dominion Drama Festival (DDF), the bastion of the theatre establishment, another organization representative of the political Left was also looking for artistic validation for their different theatre events. Their plays offered not only an alternate aesthetic but also sent a clear message about the need for social change. In

her book, *Stage Left*,⁶ Toby Ryan describes the self-conscious theatricality of The Workers' Theatre and Theatre of Action productions. Because they delivered a powerful and clear political message, there was always a strong verbal component to these productions. However, words were used imaginatively to create stage effects. There was emphasis on utilizing the elements of theatre performance to engage audiences in the event and to convey the message without drowning them in laborious polemics and debate. To startle audiences out of their complacency, these dramas were designed around shocking contrasts of light and colour, movement and sound, as well as mass and space. Although their productions won several DDF awards, Ryan writes that within the theatre establishment the company members often felt like intruders because of their artistic, political and social differences. The experiences of The Workers' Theatre and Theatre of Action have also been marginalized in the institution's historical narratives.⁷

Some theatre historians maintain that "before 1968, there was no such thing as an alternative theatre movement in Canada."⁸ If we construct our idea of an alternate in the context of theatre game poetics (process) and game aesthetics (product), then we can find several examples of alternate theatre practices in English Canada which have historical significance. These alternate theatre groups, because they were concerned with theatricality, have consciously offered Canadian audiences different aesthetic products. Historically, their productions can be viewed in

opposition to more familiar theatre games which are tied into a central theatre resource base or the **establishment**. For Roy Mitchell and Carroll Aikins, this base was represented by the commercial theatre; for Herman Voaden and Toby Ryan it was the DDF. The establishment can change its appearance but always holds tightly to the political reins of order as it maintains a privileged position within the theatre institution. Occupying an aesthetic space or territory which can be designated as "alternate" is a political gesture because it can be seen as disruptive and subversive. The existence of an alternate implicitly challenges the conventional norms which keep the hegemonic order in place and maintain the institutionalized status quo.

Although theatre historians have recently expressed considerable interest in the theatre work of Roy Mitchell, Carroll Aikins, Herman Voaden and Toby Ryan, as yet, the institution itself has not been able to fully sanction their efforts.⁹ In the following chapters, through the findings of my research, I will attempt to outline why this is the case. I have already offered some reasons such as the literary bias and our tendency to think of theatre and drama interchangeably. However, I maintain that, in the face of poststructuralist strategies and postmodern theatre games, the fabric of external control is slowly unravelling and losing its singular hold over our theory and practice. Some of us are beginning to realize that this

institutionalized control is an illusion constructed through representations which have presented only one view and one possible ideal.

I maintain that in the context of English-Canadian theatre practice, the beginning of this unravelling can be traced to the sanctioning of the Alternate Theatre in the 1970s when it became evident that alternate practices were contributing to the national canon. For the first time in our history we were **producing English-Canadian plays**, significant in both quantity and quality. As well, these plays were being produced by **professionals** rather than **amateurs** and they were generating resources which gave a boost to the theatre institution/establishment economy.

2.1 Carving Alternate Territory in English-Canadian Theatre

Although it can be argued, as Denis Johnston has done in *Up the Mainstream*, that the politics of the alternate were neutralized when the Alternate Theatres of the seventies were absorbed by the establishment, the **real possibility** of creating theatre by **an alternate process** such as collective creation could not be neutralized. When Theatre Passe Muraille's collective process was validated by virtue of support from critics who affirmed the significance of their productions and because they gained access to public funding, the English-Canadian theatre institution could no longer restrict approved theatre practice to the **interpretation of literature**. Collective creation is fundamentally oriented by **theatrical**

performance rather than **dramatic literature**. Collective creation addresses **theatricality**; it raises the issue of how to mediate drama directly on stage by constructing stage image clusters using **improvisation**. The collective may or may not include a writer just as it may or may not include designers, dancers or musicians, but it must by necessity include actors. Whatever their talents, all of the group's skills must serve **the theatrical enactment, the dramatic performance**.

Within the parameters of a sanctioned alternate territory, all performance traditions, including those which we call **paratheatrical** or **popular**, could now be used in the theatrical process. As the Mummers Troupe of Newfoundland discovered, once the aesthetics of traditions such as the old English custom of mumming¹⁰ were accessible as possible game rules, these traditions could contribute to the making of alternate games which were unique and politically disruptive.

During the 1970s alternate companies were given **official identity**; that is, they were defined on paper by the theatre institution. Because their existence as cultural entities worthy of public support was validated by various funding organizations, the practitioners of alternate theatre were given **social status**. This measure also served to **institutionalize theatrical experimentation**; in other words, it served to define and order exploratory practices as well as to facilitate them. Containment, implicit in the act of gaining status, would eventually undermine the most radical of

the alternate groups. Companies such as the Mummers Troupe found themselves marginalized because their collective ideologies and practices involved aesthetic and political risks which only proved to alienate those people who were to approve their grants.¹¹ For others, such as Tarragon Theatre and Factory Lab in Toronto, who were willing to stay close to the institution's norms, defined status allowed them to move closer to the power centre, to gain a larger share of the theatre establishment's resources.

The political achievement of the Alternates must not be obscured by the particular experiences of individual companies. Because these practitioners took a risk and tested the hegemonic rules at a time when the institution was receptive to the international wave of Alternative Theatre,¹² the articulation of a new category¹³ for sanctioned theatre work in English Canada was made possible. Historically speaking, the Alternate Theatre Movement contributed to the redefinition of normal theatre practice.

By 1980, definite territory had been claimed within the theatre institution for alternate theatre practices. As a space for theatre gamemaking, the alternate territory was organized according to some new theatre conventions, such as collective strategies and the use of improvisation. It was also regulated by many of the old conventions such as the priority given to dramatic literature. Soon a second generation of practitioners was ready to

move into the sanctioned territory and to operate within the already existing framework for making new alternate theatre games.

2.2 The Sanctioned Alternate Theatre Viewed Through the Post-structuralist / Postmodern Lens

In 1988, under the title "Understanding Difference,"¹⁴ Robert Wallace wrote:

In English Canada, playwrights conceive 'the play' as a literary text that they relinquish to actors and director only for 'reading' that is intended to help improve the text, or for a production. In this process of creation, readings are meant to serve playwrights' purposes — to alert them to problems in characterization and structure, for example, that will help them finish a script to the degree that it can be successfully staged by a theatre company. When this point is reached, a playwright's script is turned over to a director, cast and design team who usually have no connection with its evolution; yet this group is charged to 'realize' the playwright's work in a production that adheres to his or her demands, which often are contractually assured. The structure of this process is hierarchical in the extreme, with the playwright accorded authority that often continues even after the production is mounted. Reviewers, for example, frequently attempt to determine a playwright's intentions in writing a script — a practice that perpetuates the separation of text from production.¹⁵

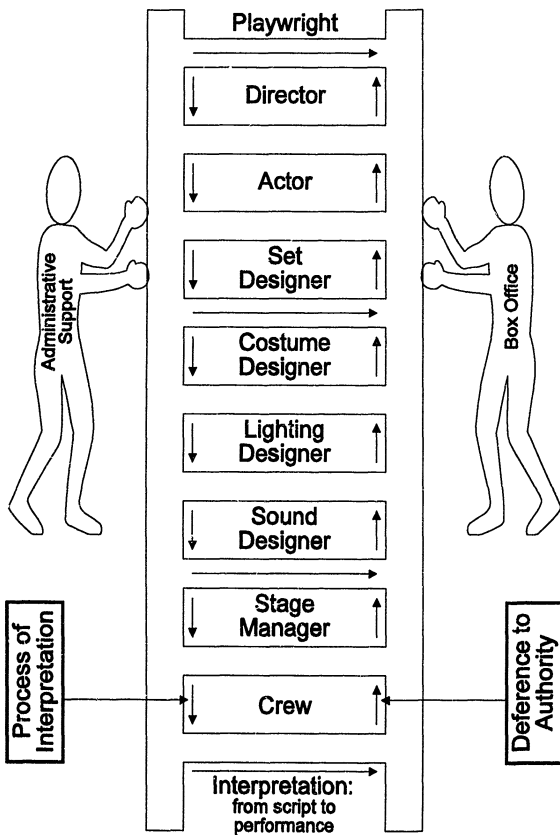
I have quoted this at length because it is from this passage that I have devised the diagram "the literary tradition for making theatre

events" (Fig. 1). This is a two-dimensional model which represents the process for theatre gamemaking maintained by the English-Canadian institution/establishment. It is a graphic interpretation of Wallace's description of the norm.

As I indicated at the beginning of this dissertation, Wallace is one of the growing number of theatre academics who place their remarks about production within a poststructuralist and postmodern context. Postmodern theatre practice, according to Wallace, is characterized by its **difference** and one of these differences is **how** theatre is generated. Wallace first recognized postmodern difference in **image-oriented** works by Gilles Maheu of Carbone 14 and Robert Lepage of Le Théâtre Repère in Quebec. Wallace has since identified the postmodern difference in some English-Canadian **fringe** productions. By fringe theatre, Wallace is not necessarily referring to those groups who perform on **The Fringe circuit**; instead he means to give distinction to the group of **small theatres** which occupy the margins of the theatre institution.¹⁶

In "Understanding Difference," Wallace continues his analysis of "the process of theatrical creation in English Canada's mainstream" by pointing to the complicity of critics and academics who **articulate** this process, **reinforce** the hierarchical model and **perpetuate** its domination. In particular, Wallace demonstrates how Urjo Kareeda, artistic director of Tarragon Theatre and a former critic, reinforces the privilege given to the playwright.

Figure 1: The Literary Tradition For Making Theatre Events



Kareda is quoted as saying: "The history of this country's theatre in the last few decades is its ongoing struggle toward a dramatic literature....The challenge was to generate a new group of playwrights."¹⁷

In another essay, dated December 1988, Wallace once again examines the role critics and academics play in championing the playwright and the literary text: "Focus on the text is common; and it reveals the underlying bias that informs not only the majority of these reviews but the prevailing predilection of theatre criticism."¹⁸

Finally, in the essay "Producing Marginality" (1989),¹⁹ Wallace does not sidestep the main issue which is the practitioner's access to the theatrical resource base: **a literary bias underlies the funding policies, both public and private.** There is little chance that someone will receive financial support for developing a theatre production in English Canada without first submitting a literary playscript to the funding agencies and without conforming to the literary model of production.²⁰

Some small theatres have been able to find funding for experimental projects through sponsorship or "seed" programs developed by established producing bodies such as Theatre Passe Muraille. Some companies such as Headlines Theatre in Vancouver find resources through other agencies by identifying their audiences as targeted social groups. In the main, however, these small theatres if they wish to be funded must **negotiate** their commitment to an alternate theatre process/product within the framework defined

by the theatre institution/establishment. This framework includes conforming to the conventional means of production which follows the model of the literary tradition.

I have found that the performative metaphor to **negotiate** is the distinctive stylistic gesture of postmodern cultural activity; it is **the sign of postmodern difference**. We should be alert, therefore, to the possibility that the productions generated by these small theatre companies can be categorized as "postmodern," a labelling which we know will explicitly problematize our knowledge about the theatre as a system of representation in relation to English-Canadian practices. In this research I have specifically addressed the ways in which these postmodern theatre practices raise questions about our theatrical discourse.

2.3 The Second Wave Alternate Theatre

I have been specific about the dates of Wallace's remarks because the chronology of his observations corresponds to a time frame which is useful in a historical study of alternate theatre events in English Canada. Wallace's analysis points to the emergence of a new set of alternate practices beginning in the 1980s which I call **the Second Wave** and place within the cultural zone called **postmodernism**. At a minimum, Wallace's narrative acknowledges the occurrence of **different** theatre practices that

can be traced to the Alternate Theatre Movement of the 1970s, although they do not adhere to the same game plans, strategies or goals.

One significant difference between the Second Wave and the Alternates of the seventies is their circumvention of the term **collective** when describing their organization and their techniques for developing original scripts.²¹ Obviously, the word "collective" carries with it dated associations from the late-sixties which imply a communal effort with members sharing responsibility for the management of the group as well as contributing equally in the creative process. Following the example of those alternate companies such as Theatre Passe Muraille which used **collective creation** as a way of making theatre events, Second Wave companies reject, in principle, the traditional hierarchical process of the literary theatre and the authority of the literary playwright-author over the drama. They talk about the collective process as a viable means of generating plays. Yet, paradoxically, following the directives of the funding bodies, these groups **mirror corporations** in their organization and therefore adhere to a hierarchical structure.²² Because they operate under a board of directors²³ and a general manager, Second Wave companies qualify for **professional** status and demonstrate their **fiscal responsibility** which makes them worthy of public financial support on an **operating grant** or **per season** rather than **per project** basis.²⁴

Because the collectives of the 1970s were ultimately relegated to the extreme margins of the theatre institution and placed on per project funding,²⁵ the professional alternate companies who followed in the eighties, have negotiated their difference by describing their projects as **collaborations**. These companies are eager to point out that a collaboration is **not one particular process** like collective creation. Instead, each theatre event is devised by a group of company members who work from different perspectives or different disciplines as a team to determine the game's poetics as well as aesthetics. The collaborators are led by the person/ persons who initiated the project, although the role of director may shift during the development of the event. Collaboration is seen as egalitarian in philosophy because the group considers the talents and skills of every member as equal parts contributing to a general pool of theatrical resources which can be tapped during the making of individual theatre games. No one person is resident writer, designer or director but everyone with expertise can fill these roles on the production team as the need arises.

On paper, the collaborative process can discursively conform to the hierarchy of the traditional theatre as long as a member of the company is assigned a title corresponding to the designation of labour in the literary model. In practice, however, the team can work as a collective and create the theatre game using the Passe Muraille method or the RSVP cycle format used by Robert Lepage.²⁶ Authority over the meaning made in the

performance may be shared or the game may be instigated and directed by a designer, an actor, or, more conventionally, by a writer or a director. Collaborative theatre projects are generally **performance oriented** because the performance event takes priority over the development of a literary text.

The Second Wave is committed to developing different processes as well as different productions and is also committed to creating theatre for (and with) a specific audience (i.e., their community). In most cases, following the precedent of the seventies' Alternates, these theatre games are **written using theatrical poetics** (i.e., using **improvisation** within a **workshop** situation).²⁷ The companies of the Second Wave see themselves as offering many alternatives to the cultural establishment. They are committed to offering their own different and subjective view of life; often they will approach a dramatic idea from multiple perspectives because they do not subscribe to the **singular perspective** of the norm. They challenge the fundamental Aristotelian notion that there can exist a **universal** point of view.²⁸ That is, they resist presenting on stage the world view traditionally represented by the establishment theatre and those first wave Alternates which have subsequently "sold out" or embraced the establishment's aesthetic and poetic practices.²⁹

The sell-out of the Alternates to the establishment was first observed by Wallace in 1980.³⁰ To Wallace, theatre companies such as Tarragon,

Toronto Free, Factory Theatre Lab, and Theatre Passe Muraille which had once thrived on experimentation had become, by 1980, venues for new establishment productions. These companies abandoned their commitment to exploration using alternate aesthetics and fully adopted the **conventions of the literary tradition**.

By 1980, the theatre games offered by these companies looked like events audiences could experience in the regional theatres. Experimentation was no longer tolerated; they could not afford the risk. There was a public expectation that these companies would consistently maintain high production standards and produce **hits**. They were also forced to pay Equity wages in line with the size of their houses. As owners of theatre real estate, these companies were saddled with mortgage payments and they were also expected to balance their budgets without increases in public subsidies. As a result, they had to stop taking chances with their programming; they had to make money. Using Wallace's metaphor, they were expected **to grow up**.

To survive through the government restraint programs of 1982-86, Wallace wrote, these companies had **to get tough**. "Getting tough" meant that, in the face of economic pressure, they had to accept a mandate to follow the corporate mode; they had to create a business plan. This plan emphasized pragmatism, fiscal responsibility, and adopted the conventional rules for making familiar theatre products which were consumer friendly.³¹ The consumers, in this instance, were not only the general paying public

but also critics and corporate sponsors from the private sector who might become patrons.

By 1986 most of the founding personnel from the Alternates had moved outside the alternate territory. Some, such as Guy Sprung, found places within the establishment regional system; some, such as John Palmer, were working outside the country. Jeremy Long, once playwright-in-residence for the communal Tamahnous Theatre in Vancouver and a former theatre officer for The Canada Council, now with British Columbia Cultural Services, told me in an interview that moving on was understandable: "You reach a certain age and you may want certain refinements and you may want something better out of life." For some, wanting something better meant wanting bigger challenges with access to more resources for making theatre. These resources were only available at the establishment or mainstream theatres which at the time welcomed experienced theatre practitioners with Canadian citizenship.³²

2.4 Negotiations with the Second Wave: Selecting Case Studies for the Purpose of Research

Early in this study, in order to articulate what I saw as the differences in production poetics and aesthetics, I selected three companies which I believe to be representative of the new alternate theatre practices in English Canada. In 1988, at the Edmonton Fringe Festival,³³ I attended a midnight performance of *Tears of a Dinosaur*, an original one-act play by

Calgary's *One Yellow Rabbit*. At the time, I was attracted to this show because it seemed to be an example of **image theatre** or, in their own words, **performance theatre**. I saw many of the elements of *In Our Waters* in this theatre piece: a braiding of language in nonlinear images, soundscape and pop music and dance-like movements with exaggerated gesture, all combined with an extravagant use of toy dinosaurs and other puppet figures including marionettes that looked like the three human characters. The set consisted of a giant dinosaur skeleton which could be manipulated from the head; from her rib cage were suspended three marionettes. The head looked down on a plain table, placed squarely to stage left. The table was masked, so that the front view could have passed for a proscenium frame for a shadow puppet theatre. Also, because the table looked like an enclosed cube, it could become an oversized jack-in-the-box.

The next year in Toronto³⁴ at The Poor Alex Theatre, I saw *Doctor Dapertutto* by Theatre Columbus, a production which also emphasized stage images but in the context of **physical theatre** and **clowning**. This full-length performance, which incorporated many variations of dance, posing in attitudes, and slapstick physicality, opened with the entire cast dressed in beatnik clothing and sunglasses doing a sixties' frug. With the magic of strobe lighting, this dance turned into a quick succession of body contortions as the performers attempted to avoid a series of blinding flashes. The central character, Doctor Dapertutto, the dancing devil,³⁵ was no hero even

though he performed his role in a dapper cream-coloured suit with a cane; visually he was a combination of Fred Astaire and Harlequin. The rest of the cast of seven presented twelve characters, all of whom were life-like but exaggerated so that they were somewhere between grotesque and ridiculous. These characters were performed with such subtle dexterity that, in combination with the farcical intricacy of stage comings and goings, it was not until the curtain call that I realized that five had been doubling.³⁶ The many set changes, executed by the performers, which involved the manipulation of several arched units, beds, chairs and tables were also choreographed and incorporated visually with a mood of fun which, in fact, countered the seriousness of the drama. Often these playful scene shifts, accompanied by rousing late-forties' dance music, were marked by Daper-tutto's leaps and other fiendish antics which sustained visual and dramatic interest through the transitions.

The work of both of these companies while different from each other in significant ways was not conventional mainstream fare; it was alternate theatre. Although these were obviously plays, they were not oriented by a literary text in the conventional use of suspense and story development, psychological motivation and well-rounded characters. Rather, these plays were oriented by overt theatricality: comic-book characterizations and the deliberate exploitation of audio-visual stage imagery with emphasis on physicality and performed gesture. Significantly, these elements were used

to explore a dramatic idea or theme rather than to reveal or sustain an intricate plot.

In 1987, I initiated research into another new theatre movement in Canada, the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance,³⁷ which is a loose network of practitioners and theatre companies, both amateur and professional, who are interested in using theatre as a tool for social and political change. Because of my association with community theatre on Salt Spring Island, I joined the alliance and found there were other groups in Canada, particularly in Nova Scotia, who were also experimenting in theatre projects with artists in various disciplines. These groups were attempting to create performances with a clear political message and image-based aesthetics. In the spring of 1988, a representative of the steering committee which organized the biannual CPTA festivals, Ruth Schneider, visited Victoria from Baddeck, Cape Breton Island and we met to discuss our theatrical experiences in the context of the Popular Theatre Movement.

Schneider was involved in an intriguing project with the St. Ann's Bay Players, a group of skilled performers, Celtic storytellers and singers, who had chosen to keep their amateur status as well as their close ties with the Cape Breton community. The mandate of the Players was to reflect back to the residents the cultural heritage of the island. At first, this aim was facilitated by producing modern Irish plays by Synge and O'Casey. These productions were financed by holding Pub Night benefits which featured

Celtic storytelling, fiddling, singing and dancing by members of the company. After attending a workshop at which they learned to develop their own plays using Popular Theatre techniques,³⁸ a small section of the group started to turn their attention to creating original plays about rural Cape Breton. They hoped to use theatre as a means of reclaiming their Gaelic roots but in a way that would also authenticate the Cape Breton experience.³⁹

For their current project, Schneider was seeking The Canada Council funding through a one-time Explorations Grant to develop a production which would "translate" magazine interviews with local islanders into a Popular Theatre event following their tradition for storytelling. The magazine interviews conducted by a local folklorist, Ron Caplan, had been published in a book called *Down North: The Book of Cape Breton's Magazine*.⁴⁰ Caplan had already devised a radio script⁴¹ from some of the interviews and with characteristic reserve and genuine concern for protecting the identity of his neighbours, he thought that it would be possible to rework these recorded stories into a series of monologue/recitations which would be delivered on stage by generic speakers. On these terms, he agreed to participate in the project.⁴²

When I received the news that the company had been successful in their grant application, I decided to include *Down North* and the St. Ann's Bay Players in this study, contextualized by their participation in the

Popular Theatre Alliance.⁴³ It seemed to me that the Alliance represented another aspect of alternate theatre and this was affirmed at the Alternate Theatre Conference, in Edmonton, August 1988, when practitioners in Popular Theatre, including David Barnet and Jan Selman from the University of Alberta, were invited to present papers on their experiences and techniques. The issue of the aesthetics of Popular Theatre and its validity as art were hotly debated during this five-day conference.

These three theatre alternate productions, *Tears of a Dinosaur*, *Doctor Dapertutto* and *Down North*, will never be classified as masterpieces; in fact, they exhibited an experimental edge which indicated that they were far from final products.⁴⁴ It was the experience of the event — the combination of overt theatricality, risk and ambition — that attracted me to *Tears of a Dinosaur* and *Doctor Dapertutto* and prompted me to arrange to interview the company members to find out more about their organization, process and goals. In the case of *Down North*, my interest initially lay in examining the implications of each step of mediation that took taped interviews to print to theatre, rather than a concern with the production which I would never experience. In the end, however, the theatrical production became the focus of my attention because the collaborators soon discovered, once they started to work on stage rather than on the page, that the words of the stories, on their own, could not generate a "moving"⁴⁵ theatre event: the audience would only listen if they were engaged by what happened on

stage. What the scriptwriters had not considered was the primary significance of creating effective stage images.⁴⁶

2.5 Discursive Negotiations: Second Wave Productions

In this study, I am not interested in comparing the three companies or their productions, but rather, in developing a vocabulary for talking about theatre which will be inclusive and address the differences I see in Second Wave theatre games. As I suggested above, I approached this project through the idea of **image theatre** which has been articulated to a limited degree by Robert Wallace in the Spring 1987 issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*.⁴⁷ I have compiled, in chart form, a composite of descriptive ideas which characterize image theatre as it relates to literary theatre. For this comparison, I used Wallace's editorial and two other articles from the same issue: "Action to Image" by Peter Feldman and "Making Image Theatre" by James O'Regan.⁴⁸ Words which were extracted verbatim appear in quotation marks (Fig. 2, see below). When I compared my three representative productions to this chart I found that they did not qualify as image theatre or as literary theatre. Something was missing from these categorical descriptions.

The historical context for image theatre, according to Peter Feldman,⁴⁹ traces its genealogy back to the international avant garde art movements, in Europe: Dada, Surrealism, Expressionism, Cubism and Futurism.

Figure 2: Comparison between Image Theatre and Literary Theatre

	Literary	Image Theatre
name:	"traditional theatre" "verbal theatre"	"performance theatre" "physical theatre" "movement theatre"
process:	"working from script"	"working from concepts"
the drama:	"the play" — "essential or primary" "narrative"; "story-telling" "literal" "statements" clear plot	"words as patterns" "visual collage" plot is obscure: "thematic"
acting:	"mimetic" "the Method" based on "psychology" motivational "objective" "emotive" "conventional characteriz- ation" [in-character, in- role]	"task-oriented" "fluid...roles" "social masks" "performing roles, attitudes" "emblematic" actors as "presenters" "labelling" [in-role]
stage images:	"a means to an end"	"an end in themselves" "non verbal" "visual" "repeated" or "simultaneous"
"images" [are]	"figures of speech" "addressed primarily to the mind" "ornaments" "word-picture[s]"	"concrete language of the stage" "addressed to [all] the senses" "visual"; "physical" "everything that occupies the stage" "the visual/physical statement the actors make with their bodies in space"
meaning:	made by "statement" "literal" using "verbal grammar" "communicates [through] context"	made by "association" "redundancy...key to effect" using "visual grammar" "explicit - communicates as it happens"

A narrative connection can be drawn between image theatre and the theatrical practices of Meyerhold, the theories of Artaud and the plays of the Absurdist. It is possible to link discursively image theatre to American Happenings and the staged events of the Situationist International as well as to Pop art and Op art and more recently to a consideration of Performance Art. The inherent risk involved in experimentation and exploration implicit in these avant garde activities is absorbed by their association with high art so that in the eyes of the cultural institution/establishment events framed by these references can be taken seriously and warrant social validation. The Alternates of the seventies found, after the excitement and sense of liberation enjoyed during the heady and experimental days of Local Initiative Program (LIP) and Opportunities for Youth (OFY) grants, that, in the face of fiscal restraint, when it came to distributing limited resources, English Canadians were not ready to subsidize an avant garde theatre except under tightly controlled circumstances. In my opinion, to begin to construct a historical narrative for the Second Wave Alternates which traces their genealogy to the international art movements would be presumptuous. We cannot view these companies in the same light as the international avant garde because our experience clearly questions whether there is a cultural space for this type of theatrical activity in English Canada. In terms of how they talk about themselves, however, many practitioners have

personally found discursive justification for their alternate practices in these precedents.⁵⁰

When I compare the three productions I have chosen to represent the new theatre games in English Canada to the criteria of image theatre, it is obvious that, although One Yellow Rabbit identifies with "performance theatre" and Theatre Columbus with "physical theatre," the appeal of their work is not its orientation toward the seriousness or elitism of **high art**. Nor are their productions studies in formalist repetitions of the same image or gesture.⁵¹ Rather, their nonrealistic, imaginative style leans closer to the fantastic, to fun and play, that is toward **popular culture**. Above all, for all three companies, their first reason for performing theatrically is to **entertain**. This idea of entertaining an audience, which is not always the motivation behind artistic experimentation, provoked me into looking at Second Wave theatre events in relation to popular theatre traditions and, in particular, to those historically found in the English-speaking theatre.

ENDNOTES

¹ For example, the question of who wrote *The Farm Show* remains hazy. As a published script, credit is given to the collective Theatre Passe Muraille. Yet when the play is discussed by critics and academics, Paul Thompson often **performs** the role of author/playwright, the voice of the creative authority. The final text is attributed to his **visionary** process of unifying diverse textual and performed images into a **documentary drama** that is more artistic than factual but which **realizes** the life of a community. See Johnston, *Up the Mainstream*, pp. 108-21 and Diane Bessai, *The Canadian Dramatist* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1992), pp. 49-79.

Bessai states openly that "collective creation is not in itself a writer's theatre" (p. 43), while the book's context, "the Canadian Dramatist" rhetorically sustains the idea of authorship within a literary framework. Bessai asks the reader to entertain the possibility that collective process can result in a playtext that **transcends** its **performed theatricality** to become **literature**. The collective drama which interests Bessai has a **writer/author**, even when the writer performs another role in the collective such as actor, director or musician (p. 244).

Alan Filewod neutralizes the difficulty of collective authorship by assigning Herbert Read's metaphor of the universal **supra-individualist mind** to the collective entity. "Collective Creation: Process, Politics and Poetics," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1982), pp. 46-58. Although he drops this strategy in his major text on documentary theatre, Filewod maintains that the collective can take a single authorial view when the group is considered "a community looking at a community," *Collective Encounters: Documentary Theatre in English Canada* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1987), p. 36.

² Mitchell articulated his vision of theatre and the making of theatre in his book, *Creative Theatre*, published originally by John Day Co., New York in 1929 and reissued in 1969 by Kindle Press with introductions by Edward Mabley and Kelly Yeaton. Mabley and Yeaton's additions to the text serve to contextualize Mitchell's ideals in relation to the experimental or Alternative Theatre Movement in the U.S. Mitchell's work remained invisible to most Canadians until 1974 when Mavor Moore wrote an article about Mitchell for the first issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, the Canadian theatre journal which gave definition to alternate theatre practice in Canada in the 1970s. See Mavor Moore, "Roy Who?" *Canadian Theatre Review* (Winter 1974), pp. 68-71.

³ James Hoffman, "Carroll Aikins and the Home Theatre," *Theatre History in Canada*, 7(1), (Spring 1986), pp. 50-70.

⁴ Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly, *English-Canadian Theatre* (Toronto: Oxford, 1987), pp. 49-51. Anton Wagner's recent text, *A Vision of Canada: Herman Voaden's Dramatic Works 1928-1945* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1993) attempts to redress the historical neglect of Voaden's work. However, Wagner tends to overcompensate for what have been identified as Voaden's shortcomings by placing emphasis on Voaden's worthy theatrical intentions. We are asked to value Voaden's persistence in encouraging experimentation and his influence on the development of a national theatre and drama.

⁵ Opera composer Jeff Corness believes that music carries the **essential drama**: "In music, properties of tension and release are accomplished by means of functional harmony. If we are left hanging on a dominant seventh chord, something in us craves its resolution — the tonic chord. The parameters needed to provide dramatic consequence are built into the medium" (p. 19) in "Faust: A Theatre that Feels Like Music," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Fall 1992), pp. 16-20.

⁶ Toby Ryan, *Stage Left: Canadian Theatre in the Thirties, A Memoir* (Toronto: CTR Publications, 1981).

⁷ Ryan, p. 132. The accomplishments of these theatre groups were excluded from the official history of the DDF: Betty Lee, *Love and Whiskey: The Story of the Dominion Drama Festival* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1973). Alan Filewod suggests that the exclusion of The Workers' Theatre/Theatre of Action is part of a larger marginalization of theatres with overt **political** mandates: "Erasing Historical Difference: The Alternative Orthodoxy in Canadian Theatre," *Theatre Journal*, 41(2), (May 1989), pp. 201-10.

I would suggest that English-Canadian critics tend to normalize the politics in all art because we tend to get squeamish when politics are mixed with aesthetics. The erasure of the Theatre of Action is consistent with this strategy. See also Dorothy Livesay, *Right Hand, Left Hand* (Erin, Ontario: Porcupic, 1977). I would also suggest that these groups have been marginalized by historians and critics because they worked as **amateurs** and they did not make a significant contribution to the canon of **Canadian dramatic literature**.

⁸ Johnston, p. 3.

⁹ Indicative of this is the apologetic tone evident in Wagner's writings about Voaden. It seems that the sanctioning of this alternate work is dependent upon finding a valid frame of interpretive reference which will

contain the theatrical experience so that it will be treated as serious and significant.

¹⁰ "Mumming" is a seasonal folk tradition: groups of players in disguise visit private homes to offer dramatic games and other gifts in exchange for refreshments. It has been a long-standing custom in Newfoundland. See "Forum: David Gardner Argues the Case for 1583" in *Theatre History in Canada*, 4(2), (Fall 1983), pp. 226-37. Also with reference to the history of the Mummies Troupe and their difficulties with funding agencies, see Alan Filewod, "Forum: The Ideological Formation of Political Theatre in Canada," *Theatre History in Canada*, 8(2), (Fall 1987), pp. 261-62.

¹¹ The official policy of the various arts councils has been one of "arms-length" management but the jurying system itself is founded on appointments, which are political in spite of claims that they are based on professional achievement. See Ann Wilson, "A Jury of Her Peers," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1987), pp. 4-8.

¹² Discursive evidence which demonstrates the institution/establishment's receptiveness to theatrical alternatives is found in the report of a study commissioned by The Province of Ontario Council for the Arts and The Canada Council, *The Awkward Stage: The Ontario Theatre Study Report*, coordinated by Mavor Moore (Toronto: Methuen, 1969). In particular, see Chapters 6 and 7, "the Community" and "Education," respectively.

¹³ This category is signified by the words "alternate" and "alternative" and the various documented activities which were part of the historical experiences of the companies including the funding policies, the productions and their aesthetic game plans, company histories and manifestos as well as critical response. When documented orally or in written form, all of these contribute to the "economy of discourse" discussed above in Section 1.7.

¹⁴ "Towards an Understanding of Theatrical Difference," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1988), pp. 5-14 and Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, pp. 177-211. The second is a rethinking/rewriting of the first with significant modifications.

¹⁵ Wallace, pp. 180-81.

¹⁶ Wallace has borrowed the term **small theatre** from the Small Theatres Caucus of the Toronto Theatres Alliance (TTA) which refers to "companies whose annual budgets are under \$150,000" (*Producing Marginality*, p. 46). Although this caucus is a Toronto-based organization, Wallace

has extended the small theatres' label to include all Canadian companies which qualify by virtue of their "economic marginalization" and "distinct aesthetic" (pp. 160-61). See also Wallace, "Survival Tactics: Size, Space and Subjectivity in Recent Toronto Theatre," in *Essays in Theatre*, 10(1), (November 1991), pp. 5-15. The bias in Wallace's critique, which centralizes theatre experience in Toronto (and Montreal), must be taken into account.

¹⁷ "They also serve who only stand and wait for rewrites," *Canadian Theatre Review*, pp. 8, 10-11, as quoted in Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, p. 181.

¹⁸ Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, p. 226.

¹⁹ Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, pp. 107-76.

²⁰ Wallace also argues that the juries made up of artists represent the traditions validated by the institution/establishment and that these appointments are political: the jurors know and agree to follow the implicit rules for funding. Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, pp. 129-31.

²¹ See Filewod, "Beyond Collective Creation" in *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1988), p. 3. My focus in this research is on Second Wave companies that originate their own theatre games.

²² See Larry McDonald, "Forum: Theatre History and the Means of Production: An Analytical Model" in *Theatre History in Canada*, 10(1), (Spring 1989), pp. 80-93.

²³ These boards are made up of influential community professionals usually lawyers and accountants who make the business decisions for the company, which include hiring and firing as well as approving programming. These board members are generally chosen because they are sympathetic to "developmental" theatre and share the commitment to producing alternative cultural products. Usually, the artists which lead the company are invited to participate on the board as nonvoting members.

²⁴ Federal and provincial budgetary cutbacks beginning in the late-eighties have eroded this system to the point where many of the professional companies' seasonal grants have been cut and more are being funded on a per show basis. This policy has affected the theatre institution across the board, mainstream as well as alternate. This does not alter the fact that the professional companies of the Second Wave were able to achieve recognized status as valued cultural entities and have been able

then by virtue of their "grantability" to access other financial resources, public and private, which are also controlled by the social establishment. The practitioners whom I interviewed acknowledged that they are the last to follow this path established by the Alternates of the seventies.

²⁵ This historical development is addressed by Alan Filewod in various publications including: "The Marginalization of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance in the Discourse of Canadian Theatre History" in *Theatre History in Canada*, 10(2), (Fall 1989), pp. 200-206; and "CPTA: A Potted History" in *The CPTA Newsletter*, 1(1), (Fall 1991), p. 2.

²⁶ See Paul Lefebvre, "New Filters for Creation" in *Canadian Theatre Review* (Fall 1987), pp. 30-35. Lepage's process is based on collective workshop techniques developed by Anna and Lawrence Halprin with Jim Burns: L Halprin and Jim Burns, *Taking Part: A Workshop Approach to Collective Creativity* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1974).

²⁷ The "workshop" and the process of "workshopping" scripts has been institutionalized by the legitimation of the alternate theatre. The funding of workshops in which professional companies develop theatre projects is common place; this is usually described as script or text development, although actors are employed to code the event theatrically using improvisation (Interview with Martha Ross and Leah Cherniak, Theatre Columbus, July 10, 1990). Funding for workshops is also available to amateur groups interested in employing professionals to teach new skills but not for developing original plays (Interview with Faith Schneider, St. Ann's Bay Players, July 30, 1990). For more on the role of the actor in the workshop process, see R.H. Thomson, "Standing in the Slipstream: Acting in English Canada," Anton Wagner (Ed.), *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1985), pp. 293-99. A valuable reference on the function of the workshop in the Alternative Theatre context is "The Workshop Issue," in *The Drama Review*, 22(4)(T80), (December 1978).

²⁸ The aesthetic implications of a fundamental change in the way people view their world as a result of a change in scientists' ideas of the physics of the natural world are relevant to our understanding of the Second Wave theatre. Refer to Natalie Crohn Schmitt, *Actors and Onlookers: Theatre and Twentieth-Century Scientific Views of Nature* (Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press, 1990).

²⁹ In my interviews with members of the companies of the Second Wave, credit was given to those companies of the 1970s which laid the foundations for their existence and survival as **alternate theatres**. Established definitions and guidelines for alternate theatre companies have allowed those

from the Second Wave to inherit the small, not-for-profit status and identity once ascribed to Alternates of the 1970s. Having status and funding does not mean that Second Wave companies are not marginalized within the theatre institution/establishment. They still find themselves vulnerable because they do not follow all of the conventional practices or ideologies and they tend to serve smaller audiences, which are politically marginalized because of economics, age, gender, ethnic and sexual orientation.

³⁰ "Growing Pains: Toronto Theatre in the 1970s," *Producing Marginality*, pp. 65-95. This essay is dated "February, 1980" and was first published in *Canadian Literature*, 85 (1980), pp. 71-85.

³¹ "Getting Tough: Theatre in Ontario, 1982-1986," *Producing Marginality*, pp. 97-105. This essay is dated "January, 1988" and was originally commissioned for *Canada On Stage: 1982-86*, a yearbook published by The Professional Association of Canadian Theatres (PACT) Communications Centre.

³² Taped interview October 31, 1990.

³³ I happened to be in Edmonton at this time to attend the Alternate Theatre Conference at the University of Alberta.

³⁴ I was in Toronto in 1989 because I was attending the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance Festival, *Bread and Butter*, at Guelph.

³⁵ The character Doctor Dapertutto is familiar to some because he is found in a tale by E.T.A. Hoffman. Actually, the initial reference for the company was to Meyerhold who used "Dr. Dapertutto" as an alias when he was doing experimental theatre projects. The notes in the company files also indicate that "dapertutto" is Italian for "everywhere."

The idea for the character and role was suggested to the playwright, Martha Ross, and the director, Leah Cherniak, by fellow collaborator, Kevin Teichroeb when the show was in its initial workshop stage. This workshop, funded by a Chalmers' playwright's grant awarded to Teichroeb, was first conceived as an exploration in improvisation and mask around the idea of people (clowns) who are staying at a hotel; their common bond is the activity of social protest. At the hotel, they encounter a suicidal bellhop and Doctor Dapertutto, the business manager. In the context of the play written for the Theatre Columbus season, Ross and Cherniak both admit that they did not know who Dapertutto was initially and what dramatic role he would play until they discovered the image of the dancing devil. In fact, Mark

Christmann, who played the role, is listed in the application to The Canada Council as a maskmaker rather than as an actor.

I was not aware of this Hoffman (or Meyerhold) source until Michael Booth suggested a connection. Knowing the baggage which this character brings to the drama has not changed my experience of the theatrical event. There were sufficient cultural references in the theatrical coding which allowed me to arrive at the idea of the "dancing devil" without any of these connections to literary or theatrical history.

³⁶ The program clearly indicates that doubling is to take place, but even when I watch the video today I still lose track of who is playing what roles. I consider this evidence of the magic of theatrical transformation.

³⁷ For the purposes of this study, I will be distinguishing "Popular Theatre" from "popular theatre" by using the upper case to designate the CPTA movement and the processes which have been adopted by these practitioners. These are many and varied and include Catalyst Theatre's "collective interventions" as documented by Alan Filewod in *Collective Encounters* and the methods of the Theatre of the Oppressed as theorized and practised by Augusto Boal and employed in this country by companies such as Headlines Theatre in Vancouver.

The lower case "popular theatre" is used to signify the traditions and conventional practices which have been identified as "paratheatrical" or outside the theatre (i.e., outside the literary tradition). Often these practices are associated with *commedia dell'arte*. See Jeffery Sweet (Ed.), *Something Wonderful Right Away* (New York: Avon Books, 1978), pp. xv-xvi.

³⁸ This workshop was given by Jane Heather from Catalyst Theatre in Edmonton and Michael Sobota of Magnus Theatre in Thunder Bay. The group was divided in their opinion of the effectiveness of Popular Theatre. Several members wanted to maintain a focus on traditional scripts which were always popular with the community audiences, while others wished to explore the possibilities of using theatre to present more topical issues. Ruth Schneider has described the local population as "politically shy" and in general even their Popular pieces, including *Down North*, reflect a conservative approach to controversial issues which could potentially divide the community.

³⁹ The Players place themselves in opposition to two other cultural institutions which offer theatrical or public images of "the Cape Bretoner" and "the Gaelic Highlander." *The Summertime Revue*, originating in Sydney for summer touring, has featured professional Cape Breton performers such as Rita MacNeil. In an interview, Schneider described these productions as

"slick." In short "skits" the local Cape Bretoners are stereotyped as beer-drinking, a little dim and from the backwoods. The Highlander featured in the tourist brochures can be found at the Gaelic College, near St. Ann's Bay, where one can attend polished performances of Highland dancing and piping or take courses in Gaelic customs. The locals are quite cynical about the tax money spent in support of the College, although it has proven to be a successful tourist draw along with the Alexander Graham Bell Museum in Baddeck (Interview with R. Schneider, July 30, 1990).

⁴⁰ Ron Caplan, *Down North: The Book of Cape Breton's Magazine* (Toronto: Doubleday, 1980). A second text, edited by Ron Caplan, *Cape Breton Lives* was published in 1988 (St. John's, Newfoundland: Breakwater Books) and was widely available at tourist centres "down east," including the gift store on the ferry between Sydney and Port-aux-Basques, Newfoundland.

⁴¹ This was not the script used later on CBC Morningside. The 1991 radio script was derived from the theatre script with considerable input from the "translator," Silver Donald Cameron.

⁴² In her application to The Canada Council, Schneider cited the English-Canadian production *Paper Wheat*, a collective creation produced in the late-70s by the 25th Street Theatre, Saskatoon which the Cape Breton company had seen on film. The Players had also successfully produced *Under Milkwood* and this became Caplan's theatrical reference for the *Down North* project.

⁴³ From the outset, I planned to visit Baddeck to interview Schneider and Bev Brett, the company's director, in their home community. I knew the chances that I would see a live performance of *Down North* were slight, although the company did perform at a folklorist's convention in New Brunswick a month before my arrival. I was, however, able to attend another Players' production, *Present Time* by Daniel MacIvor, which was a traditional literary play, in the manner of David French's *Leaving Home*. This script had originally been developed for Tarragon Theatre, where it had not had a successful run. *Present Time* cannot be considered a Popular Theatre event *per se*, although it did reflect the cultural heritage of the island. This production, however, allowed me to experience directly the local dialect and Celtic traditions of storytelling and singing as well as to meet several of the actors involved in *Down North*. I also had first-hand experience of the community's reception and acceptance of this group. *Present Time*, a play that deals truthfully with alcoholism, did not show the pretty side of Cape Breton and the Players were concerned their loyal followers would object to seeing themselves as flawed. The production, too,

was technically flawed. However, the audience, made up of locals rather than tourists, many of whom were repeat customers like me, showed their appreciation with a resounding standing ovation and afterwards many waited enthusiastically to greet the performers and personally tell them how meaningful the performance was. This behaviour was in direct contrast to their usual public demeanour, which can only be described as Scots Presbyterian reserve.

⁴⁴ For me, this edge signified potential and possibility, while for many critics such as Ray Conlogue the lack of conventional finish was disconcerting. He described the script/story of *Doctor Dapertutto* as "seriously going off the rails...underwritten" (*Globe and Mail*, from Theatre Columbus files, no date) and when comparing *Tears of a Dinosaur* to a more recent production *Land of the Animals*, the former was "less successful" in addressing what Conlogue saw as the dramatic issue, "the relationship between mankind and the planet" (*Globe and Mail*, March 2, 1991, p. C3). The fact that Conlogue's criticisms are directed at the dramatic narrative is significant. Of course, he did not see *Down North*; it would be unlikely that this event would have been reviewed by Conlogue, even if they were able to play in Toronto because the company is amateur and Popular in orientation.

⁴⁵ The word "moving" is found frequently in the correspondence between the collaborators and to the granting agency.

⁴⁶ Because of her background in dramatic literature, Schneider submitted a first draft to Explorations that imposed a dramatic structure on Caplan's text but this was afterwards rejected. When the script went into rehearsal this structure was dropped and the company returned to the idea of straight monologues with unidentified speakers. It soon became apparent that this would be another instance of "deadly theatre" and Bev Brett, the director, started to work theatrically. The actors began to develop characters based on local impressions of the people interviewed, often making them identifiable by their broad mannerisms. Rather than alienate the community, this localism was appreciated by the audiences during the tour and many remarked how the spirit of the real person had been captured by the actor. This is a significant appraisal considering that the Celtic belief systems based on convictions of the reality of a spirit world still circulate in Cape Breton communities.

It is interesting to note that only the two initial scriptwriters were funded for wages in the Explorations project. Monies to finance the second stage of the process — bringing the text to the stage — were cut when the grant was awarded. Hence the director, Bev Brett, was never paid for her contribution to the final product.

⁴⁷ Robert Wallace, "Image Theatre" (Editorial), *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1987), p. 3.

⁴⁸ Peter Feldman, "Action to Image," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1987), pp. 4-9. Also James O'Regan, "Making Image Theatre," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1987), pp. 10-13.

⁴⁹ Feldman, "Action to Image," pp. 4-6.

⁵⁰ I have come to this conclusion after interviewing Jeremy Long (October 1990) and Gyl Raby (August 1990). The former left me with the impression that theatre officers, while aware of international precedents and measuring Canadian work by international standards of excellence, only recommend companies for funding and guide them in their applications; they are not able to set public cultural policy. At the time of her interview, Gyl Raby believed only Robert Lepage would be able to find sufficient funding to experiment in image theatre *per se*.

⁵¹ Refer to Michael Kirby, *A Formalist Theatre* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1987).

CHAPTER 3

CONSTRUCTING THE SECOND WAVE WITHIN AN HISTORICAL CONTEXT

3.0 Introduction

Rather than attempt to connect the Second Wave to the Alternate Movement of the 1970s in a linear or **diachronic** narrative which would only be possible if we discount the regional differences and unique performance histories of the many companies that consider themselves alternatives to the mainstream, I have borrowed Renate Usmiani's **synchronic** approach and compiled a six-part agenda which addresses the relationship between performance strategies in the seventies and those of the Second Wave.¹ This agenda considers: performance space; audiences; experimentation; theatrical hierarchy; the mandate for social and political change; and the issue of nationalism. The purpose of this examination is not only to trace the historical differences but also to lead us into a consideration of what makes these events **popular**.

3.1 Performance Space

The alternate theatre chooses to produce theatre outside the perceived theatre establishment by performing in found spaces or in non-traditional situations such as are offered on The Fringe circuit. One Yellow Rabbit performed at the first Edmonton Fringe in 1983 and this festival

became a regular stop on their production schedule, which meant that at least one show in the season was planned as a tour.² Second Wave companies know that regular touring on The Fringe circuit or in other alternate venues means that productions must be flexible to fit unusual spaces and should require minimal technical resources, especially lighting. Touring means wider exposure. The company's anticipated audience or community is no longer drawn from one centre; instead, it becomes a network of enthusiastic *aficionados* who follow a company's work and attend as many performances as possible.³

Small alternate theatre spaces are now found in almost every town where the idea of converting a warehouse or a storefront into a theatre is no longer unusual. For most of the early Toronto Alternates, these converted warehouse spaces have become the real estate that provides leverage for their credit at the bank, which, as we have seen, is both a burden and a blessing. At the time of my research, both One Yellow Rabbit in Calgary and Theatre Columbus in Toronto were resident in permanent home theatres. One Yellow Rabbit rents The Secret Theatre, a converted cocktail lounge at the Plus 15 walkway in the Calgary Centre for the Performing Arts. This rectangular box without a permanent stage is conducive to experimentation with different audience-stage relationships.

In Toronto, Theatre Columbus has been part of a triumvirate of alternate companies⁴ that managed The Poor Alex on Brunswick Avenue,

off Bloor Street. The Poor Alex is a small theatre venue which has had a history of involvement in alternate theatre work that has lasted for twenty years.⁵ Its functional plain black decor and conventional seating arrangement with an end stage is indicative of the aesthetic of lesser means associated with the institutionalization of the alternate movement. These theatre spaces can be categorized as posing creative limitations or challenging obstacles, but it was obvious when I attended events at these theatres that both the resident company and their audience considered them home.

The expectations around the occasion of the theatre event created by an alternate aesthetic have radically changed over the last twenty years. Theatre can happen in a pub, a park, or a shopping mall. In Cape Breton, the seasonal programming for the St. Ann's Bay Players incorporates fundraising Pub Nights and the list of duties assigned to company members includes someone⁶ to procure the liquor licence and run the bar. For the Players, the performance is always planned in conjunction with a tour of local community halls and also involves performances in larger venues or school gymnasiums for special events, such as the Centre Bras d'Or Festival of the Arts, held annually in Baddeck in the summer. These performances are well publicized and attract tourist audiences as well as locals. The Players have also devised Popular Theatre pieces which have been shown to target audiences in conference spaces and other meeting rooms. The

company and their shows are very flexible; all pitch in to help set up and strike at the end of each performance run. At times, travel has become an obstacle when the costs and time commitments make long-distance performances prohibitive; the group has missed out on opportunities for national exposure for this reason.⁷

3.2 Audiences

Along with the move away from plush seats and velour curtains in establishment theatres, the alternate has sought to develop new audiences for theatre. Efforts have been made to expand the audience base to include the urban and rural working class, the younger generation and all those marginalized by the middle-class pretension and display of wealth in the establishment theatre. In 1969, Jim Garrard (founder of Theatre Passe Muraille) hoped that "theatre would become as popular as bowling."⁸

Like their predecessors, the Second Wave attempts to cultivate an audience which seeks to challenge the theatrical status quo. Blake Brooker of One Yellow Rabbit maintains that his plays are not for everybody, but there is still room for wide audience appeal.⁹ Not only have these groups inherited the audience base looking for alternatives to the establishment mainstream but there are many theatregoers who do not confine themselves to one kind of theatre. These people are, in general, culturally eclectic; they enjoy classics, pop, rock and jazz and go to concerts, movies, read books and

watch home videos as well as hockey games. They come for the **experience** of live theatre and hope to see something "hot" or "hip" and "on the edge" without getting bored by elusive art. For these audiences, dressing "up" is always an option but dressing "down" is equally acceptable. The intent within the alternate is to make theatre intriguing, inviting, accessible and an occasion.

Even when they contextualize their work as Popular Theatre, these companies do not alienate audiences with didactic propaganda or polemical debate. Their ideology is found inside fun and play.¹⁰ According to practitioners, alternate theatre has now become community specific to the degree that they address particular social issues of interest to their particular audiences. Sometimes, as in the case of St. Ann's Bay Players, the performers are speaking for a socially marginalized group, although they do not make their intentions politically overt. There are some Second Wave Alternates, such as Maenads Theatre in Calgary or Buddies in Bad Times in Toronto, who have identified their audiences according to a specific community profile, such as gender or sexual orientation. At the same time, their playful approach and aesthetic edge allow them to appeal to that broader audience looking for theatrical variety and challenge.

Although I selected to examine Theatre Columbus and One Yellow Rabbit at a time when they had achieved national recognition, their histories as Alternates date back several years. Theatre Columbus' first

performances in 1983 were for women's groups and hence they developed a special-interest following. This audience was augmented by those interested in the clown-based theatre which hit Toronto in the early eighties when students of the L'Ecole Jacques LeCoq, such as Martha Ross and Leah Cherniak, returned from Paris with new *buffoon* and *commedia* techniques to share. At the same time, the influential teacher, Richard Fochinko, was offering classes in clown and mask and his students (e.g., Cheryl Cashman and Ian Wallace) were not only giving performances but also holding workshops in clowning.

Michael Green, co-artistic director of One Yellow Rabbit, also produces the annual High Performance Rodeo, and brings a festival of performance art to The Secret Theatre. To attract audiences, he strategically has called this occasion a "rodeo" not only because the term is familiar to Calgarians but also because it eliminates all of the alienating connotations associated with the word "art" and allows performance to reign playfully over the event.

To meet the ends of inclusiveness while eschewing the notions of commercial populism or political theatre, theatrical strategies are borrowed from popular culture as well as from popular theatre traditions (para-theatre). The new alternate does not shy away from appealing to audiences through **entertainment**.

3.3 Experimentation

For the practitioners, in alternate theatre, the emphasis is more on process than product. Although they schedule their creative process to work toward a set theatre event, becoming an alternate company implies a commitment to theatrical research. Therefore the focus is as much on how they are going to make theatre as the theatre event they make and with every performance the production remains open to further discovery. Every original production that is developed by an alternate company is considered to a degree a work-in-progress, because each project is viewed as an ongoing learning experience.

A common objective of every alternate company seems to be the presentation of "something that audiences have never seen before."¹¹ This goal works in tandem with exploration to discover the unique potential offered by theatrical communication. Blake Brooker is quoted as saying: "I think it has something to do with creating a situation that can be gained nowhere else but in the theatre."¹²

Of his goals for *Passe Muraille*, Jim Garrard wrote in 1969 that he wished to create "a theatre free of distinctions between actor and spectator, between drama as one art form, music as another and dancing as yet another."¹³ This mandate is still a tenet of Second Wave Alternate practice. Paul Thompson says he structured *The Farm Show* (1972) along the lines of a Sunday School concert, which in the 1970s was a radical approach

because it implied that a serious cultural product could be created through methods which in establishment theatre circles were seen as trivial and associated with amateurism.

Paul Thompson's candour demonstrates the open approach to making theatre within the designated alternate. As theatre experimentalists, alternate practitioners are always looking for different ways to present their ideas theatrically and often attend workshops or take classes from teachers who offer different production techniques. As we saw above, Martha Ross and Leah Cherniak studied clown-based theatre with Jacques LeCoq in Paris, where the emphasis was on "physical showing."¹⁴ Another common reference in the Second Wave is the teaching of the late Richard Pochinko, who was also LeCoq trained but influenced, too, by Native performance. In 1984, the One Yellow Rabbit company studied mask and clown under Ian Wallace, the director of Pochinko's clown laboratory, Theatre Resource Centre in Ottawa.¹⁵ Director Bev Brett of St. Ann's Bay Players also took classes with Pochinko to augment her previous experience in Boston with Black Wheat Theatre, a "cousin" to Bread and Puppet, where she worked with mask, mime and giant puppets.¹⁶

Michael Green and Gyl Raby, original members of One Yellow Rabbit, cite an important ten-week workshop in 1983, with Richard Fowler,¹⁷ who offered classes in physical theatre. This experience was a significant influence on their approach to developing original plays. Raby refers to

exploring theatrical poetics in an attempt to create "Fowler moments," a series of imagistic "high points" which create powerful dramatic effects because of the textured play of sound, word, movement, costume, colour, light and idea. These Fowler moments structure the event in a dramatic form that does not follow the predictable pattern of rising and falling action leading to the conventional climax and denouement. Although Raby was no longer with the company at the time of the *Tears of a Dinosaur* production, the process of working for moments rather than dramatic throughline is still evident. This performance strategy structurally complements Blake Brooker's expansive textual images and the hyperbole created by the exaggerated "movement vocabularies" developed by the actors.¹⁸

Leah Cherniak and Martha Ross also refer to the development of "theatre vocabularies" when discussing their creative process. Their applications to The Canada Council indicate that they begin each project with an idea-image and build out as well as around the idea, and related ideas, in an exploratory manner using improvisation.¹⁹

Most of these practitioners read theatre journals such as *The Drama Review*, *Canadian Theatre Review* and *Theatrum*²⁰ and are at least aware of American or European experiments as well as new theatre in Quebec. Because they are questioning conventional processes for creating theatre events, the experiments of the Second Wave challenge us to rethink what the making of **theatre** means in the social context of cultural production.

By examining alternate work in a national and international context, these publications contribute to this questioning and encourage exploration. I found in my interviews with members of Second Wave companies that they were keenly aware of the significance of how we talk about theatre and how talk is relevant to their existence. Likely this was because these practitioners were all alert to the fact that their survival depended upon their ability to find a language to describe their work to granting agencies and corporate sponsors. This language must not only reflect their purpose and commitment but also must represent them in terms which conform to the criteria of valued culture. This manipulation of language is referred to as "grantsmanship."²¹

The companies of the Second Wave are asking audiences to share in new perspectives, to examine life's differences through the unique experience of the theatre event. In order to present multiple perspectives, practitioners are taking risks with nonlinear forms such as the Fowler moments referred to above and with episodic structures which allow Theatre Columbus to treat equally several characters *in situ* by incorporating virtuoso *lazzi* turns²² as well as song and dance routines into the drama. In *Down North*, the structure was episodic as well as nonlinear in that it offered a series of moments rather than plotline. This production also used simultaneous settings or multiple staging in order to facilitate the juxtaposition of dramatic scenes.

In all three of these Second Wave companies, live performance is often integrated with music, dance, mime, puppets, and/or masks depending on the objectives of the project and the artists who are wanting to participate in the collaboration. Theatrical strategies which involve the incorporation of other disciplines or theatrical traditions such as mask and puppets can open the performance to a display of different perspectives on a singular idea rather than following the conventions of the theatre of illusion, which seeks unification and containment. Bringing other disciplines and historical traditions into contemporary practice is not an original approach in English-speaking theatre, but the intent is radical because they are being mined self-consciously for their theatrical potential. These strategies undermine the conventions of the establishment theatre and the priority given to literature and therefore present risks and challenges. The productions appear to some to be more like variety shows or a hybrid of circus and the musical so that the distinctions between the **serious** theatre and the **popular** are no longer clear.²³

3.4 Social and Political Change

In the seventies, the Alternates tried to further the cause for social change by writing plays which addressed social issues on a literal level or presented characters and situations which had otherwise been ignored by the establishment theatre. Sharon Pollock and George Ryga are just two

playwrights from the first wave whose social plays have helped to constitute a Canadian canon of dramatic literature. Also, a play about daily life in a farm community was unheard of in the establishment theatre before Passe Muraille created *The Farm Show*.²⁴

When the alternate theatre first went public, the **poor and rough** approach to theatre practice was adopted more out of necessity than because it was either an aesthetic choice or a collective statement against materialism. Eventually everyday earthiness and cultivated austerity served as a sign of the counterculture and seemed to attract audiences who otherwise felt alienated in the richer theatres. "Poverty" and "making do with less" became aesthetic rules which reflected social consciousness. As a result, while many practitioners longed for access to greater resources, some performers and their audiences became socially and politically committed to facilitating a theatrical voice for communities which had been marginalized by establishment aesthetic ideals. The political intent of the Mummers Troupe in Newfoundland has already been discussed in the context of their relationship to granting agencies (2.1), and the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance owes its existence to the organizational skills of some of the members of the disbanded Mummers collective.²⁵ It is also interesting to note that when Passe Muraille returned to Toronto to develop collective works, they brought their aesthetic of austerity into the urban milieu. As they had with *The Farm Show*, the company hoped, through their collective

process, to create a sense of community within the city by presenting on stage the everyday social realities experienced by their urban audience. Based on my research, I believe this purpose, which reflected the idealism of the times, was genuinely felt by Thompson and many of his actors, even when their objectives were not met in actual production.

Although they wear a veneer of pragmatism, the practitioners of the Second Wave Alternate are no less idealistic and committed to carrying the message for social change, on global and personal levels. They willingly share their views on social ideologies and value careful research into the issues which will become the ideas that generate stage images.²⁶ Their personal politics are not overt; in fact, as we saw in Cape Breton, they are shy when it comes to sharing their political allegiance. Because we are not living in times when anti-establishment views are socially valued, although they may be tolerated, I observed that Second Wave companies tend to proceed with caution. Their radicalism is channelled more toward form than content although, even when offering techniques contrary to establishment norms, they demonstrate a willingness to **negotiate** their claim to cultural territory, to work within the system. This is a mark of their postmodern difference.

Second Wave practitioners freely admit that austerity is not a badge of their social cause. Instead, it has been incorporated into their game rules because they all started with very few technical resources. For One Yellow

Rabbit, the focus on performance and the actor's ability to show-and-tell the dramatic story in movement as well as voice have been enhanced by austerity because they are aware of the impact of selectivity and effective choice; they present spectacle without having to put everything on the stage. The company has always worked with few lighting instruments and minimal scenographic demands to accommodate the limitations of The Fringe and other touring venues. Scenic display becomes another form of working in motif or "vocabularies" so that in *Tears of a Dinosaur* the dinosaur figurations recur in rhythmical patterns in conjunction with gesture and movement and are woven through the visual space the way the sound-score and vocalized text carve aural space. Bev Brett, company director, has also indicated that the St. Ann's Bay Players are challenged to create dramatic worlds that are imaginative and yet adaptable to the fixed proscenium arrangements and low ceilings of small community halls. Conventional stage flats will often be arranged in unconventional ways. The limitations of their resources often prove to be their greatest creative asset when it comes to setting aesthetic game rules.

Because issue-oriented plays have become the norm in the institutionalized alternate theatre, Second Wave companies are not expecting that they will influence universal change by addressing issues; rather, they see their work in more limited terms because they create theatre with their own communities in mind. Even a city like Calgary can be seen in terms of

cultural marginalization if cast in relation to Toronto or European centres. The references to "rodeo" referred to above are an indication that this marginalization is not offered as a feeling of Absurdist alienation. Rather, I believe the cultural marginalization in Calgary is celebrated by One Yellow Rabbit in that they know their audiences will be receptive to their theatrical exaggeration, hilarity and overt weirdness which comes with a serious message.

With regard to the matter of the social and political implications of cultural marginalization, the Cape Breton company takes as its particular mandate the production of theatre events which will reclaim the cultural roots of the local community. Even though this objective translates into theatrical productions that are steeped in the sounds and sights of Celtic music and dance, as well as in a Gaelic appreciation for language, the manifestation of this local heritage carries with it political difficulties — not the least of which is the problem that many of the participants, including the director, are not "locals" but are "immigrants."²⁷ Many of the locals do not want to address the social problems and would rather see their lives romanticized or stereotyped in broad farce. The urbanites in Sydney are not interested in plays about rural Cape Breton and the strong minded individuals who choose to live in remote regions of the countryside are wary of the lure of industry, technology and the media. The cultural revival in Cape Breton has afforded The Players a focus for their productions which has

allowed them to move outside the parameters of the amateur theatre and its derogatory associations. Their affiliation with CPTA and the folklorists represented by Ron Caplan has provided this company with opportunities to develop projects around social issues that incorporate their own performance traditions as well as their own unique brand of off-beat humour and to perform their work in a larger forum. I believe they are quite justified in their claim that they are amateurs by choice.²⁸

Second Wave companies utilize theatre conventions such as carnival, puppetry and clowning which are often seen as benign and childlike but can also make historical claims to subversive use because, in the context of social semiotics, they symbolize the inversion of community norms.²⁹ The clowning techniques brought into the institutionalized theatre by Theatre Columbus have perplexed many critics who view the surface naivete of clown as lacking "sophistication"³⁰ and the ambiguity of the clown as character-in-role as a lack of political ideology.³¹ The work of Theatre Columbus is often viewed as apolitical because their plays resist prescriptive solutions and polemics. At the same time, through their alternate practices, these playwrights still attempt to undermine the dominant social order. Their applications to The Canada Council indicate that Theatre Columbus have employed other popular traditions such as tableaux, two-dimensional cartoon characters, direct address as well as song and dance. By simply raising questions in audiences' minds, by fracturing a

linear perception of the world and by showing through the cracks possibilities for change, the new alternate has negotiated their theatre into a different way of performing politically.

3.5 Dismantling Theatre's Traditional Hierarchy

Usmiani writes: "Alternative theatre is not necessarily based on the traditional author-director-script triangle; it often uses techniques of collective creation and improvisation, with or without co-operation by a writer."³² The "traditional triangle" is a reference to the same literary tradition followed by the establishment theatre which I have modelled as a hierarchical ladder (Fig. 1). The development of an egalitarian approach to making theatre has always been part of the alternate mandate, although Theatre Passe Muraille was the only 1970s' Alternate which actually refined a collective process for making theatre. As we have seen, under pressure to create scripts, playwrights are often developed using input from actors in group workshops where the writing is augmented through **improvisation**.³³ This strategy for play development has carried into the Second Wave as the workshop process; it has become sanctioned practice and is frequently funded by the theatre institution.³⁴

As I have described above, by structuring their companies as **collaboratives**, Second Wave companies negotiate between the collective and the traditional hierarchy. In his article, "Means of Production,"³⁵ Larry

MacDonald outlines how the institution perpetuates the hierarchical nature of theatre production by insisting that funded companies follow the corporate model of operation. Although the Second Wave Alternates structure their companies according to the necessary regulations, which include a demonstration that they are producing texts with a "playwright," they successfully negotiate their alternate practices within these limitations by focussing on the performance event. In most cases, the script is seen as a blueprint or scenario for the performance of a theatre game.³⁶ The text becomes a springboard for improvised business with the audience, a show of skill, the clown's *lazzi* or a puppet performance.³⁷ Spectacle, the magic of lights and sound as well as music and dance undermine the authority of text. Theatre has become "more than just words."³⁸

Because it has negotiated space in the cultural territory of the theatre institution, the Second Wave alternate theatre seems to be licensed to rediscover its **theatricality** and to realize the heritage of **performance**. This is only possible, however, if these companies remain content with their alternate status and do not seek significant increases in their grants to raise their production budgets.³⁹

3.6 Nationalism

The first alternate theatre in English Canada differed from the international Alternative Movement in that it was focussed on developing an

indigenous theatre which would combat cultural colonialism.⁴⁰ As I have said, the validation of the 1970s' Alternates can be linked directly to the investment made by practitioners in developing dramatic literature. Within the English-Canadian theatre institution, there has also been, historically, a parallel interest in expanding the **professional** theatre network.⁴¹ The small alternate theatre companies provided more employment opportunities for Canadians in Canada. The theatre institution was therefore more willing to accommodate alternate theatre practices because these new companies were able to express their goals in terms which corresponded to the government policies on education, job creation and culture. They also did not pose a threat to the survival of the larger establishment theatres already in existence. These upstart companies could only benefit theatre activities everywhere because they brought in new enthusiastic audiences for theatre and the publicity they generated raised the public's awareness of what was happening in theatre in general.

While the Second Wave continues the established mandate to create indigenous English-Canadian theatre, practitioners resist the institution's interest in developing literature. The idea of generating English-Canadian plays seems self-evident within the sanctioned territory of the alternate: if plays are original and in English, they must be English-Canadian. Practitioners strategically avoid nationalist dogma, even in their grant applications, because they resist the implications of ethnic xenophobia and

parochialism. Second Wave companies either maintain a pluralist perspective and resist limiting their identity within a strict English-Canadian label or they identify themselves with their local communities such as Cape Breton, Toronto or Calgary, although their interest in touring indicates that they would hope to create productions that "travel" well.⁴² In fact, these playmakers see themselves as citizens of many communities locally, regionally, nationally and internationally including communities of race, gender, sexual orientation and social class.⁴³

As practitioners have become interested in the connection between their work and contemporary theoretical discourse, alternate practice has become a process of strategic and self-conscious exploration. In form and content, these theatre games are eclectic; playmakers borrow freely from other cultures and performance traditions and attempt to remain flexible and open to new ideas. In opening their practice to outside influences, such as the Native trickster through the influence of Richard Pochinko and European mime traditions through the influence of Jacques LeCoq, I believe the English-Canadian alternate movement has inadvertently rediscovered its own popular heritage within the English-speaking theatre tradition.

3.7 Historical Research and the Analogy of the Scientific Experiment: Further Negotiations

In this dissertation I propose that the historical significance of the Second Wave Alternate Theatre in English Canada lies in its **negotiation**

between the popular and the literary tradition in English-speaking theatre. This performed negotiation between the popular and the literary is implicitly **political** because it undermines the stability of the theatre institution/establishment in English Canada. It introduces into our **serious** theatre practice **popular strategies** which have not traditionally been sanctioned within our theatre institution. This practice undermines how we describe and define **theatre** in English Canada.

In the following chapters of this dissertation, I am offering an empirical study of the way we talk about theatre in English Canada and the performed implications of conventional theatre discourse as it relates to the popular tradition. Because we have designated the popular theatre as "para-theatre" or the "other," we tend to overlook the significance of it as a body of theatrical practices. We do not teach "popular theatre" in academic situations unless we can make it conform to the literary paradigm. In fact, when I began my research in 1986, I had no way of answering the question, "What is popular theatre?" and there are very few texts which address this topic. What I was encountering was confusing: the theatrical practices I was learning about because of my involvement with the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance did not seem to encompass what I had studied about popular activities such as clowning, mask and carnival.

Because I am moving into unknown territory, I have constructed this dissertation using the analogy of the scientific experiment to perform a

process of discovery, oriented by theatre texts which are considered common knowledge. I offer, therefore, the following hypothesis:

- a) that the English-Canadian theatre institution is structured and determined by the literary model for theatre practice. This limits the possibilities for recognizing and talking about valid theatre practices because our institutionalized discourse cannot accommodate nonliterary forms, except in trivializing or negative terms.
- b) that an examination of the popular tradition in English-speaking theatre will provide other terminologies for practical conventions and concepts that can broaden our perception of theatre events as well as expand our theatre vocabulary. This will allow us to accommodate the range of valid theatre practices which I have observed are part of a "postmodern" or "second wave" of alternate theatre in English Canada.

I have developed a methodology for this research which is based on theories of poststructural analysis. In particular, it is informed by my interpretation of Michel Foucault's approach to historiography.

In Chapters 4 and 5, in an attempt to ascertain the validity of part (a) of my hypothesis, I examined English-Canadian theatrical discourse. I found that once I became conscious of the hierarchical model for the theatre event in the literary tradition, its function as a structural paradigm became obvious. This paradigm is repeated within our discourse as if the only way we make **theatre** that has cultural value and **significance** is through the **interpretation of a set of literary textual givens**.

Having identified the discursive model for theatre, I have specifically examined **historical narratives** about English-Canadian theatre practice

and have isolated the **rules or conventions** which govern how we describe theatre practices and sustain the dominant interpretive paradigm for theatre. I maintain that, while stabilizing the discourse, these rules have limited our view of theatre and its social significance by reinscribing the literary tradition as the **universal norm** and thereby have marginalized or erased the significance of popular performance traditions.

I suggest that these rules can be seen as codes of information which refer to a **master narrative** we know as **liberal humanism**.⁴⁴ The master narrative grounds the meaning generated by the coding of these rules to a particular social and political value system. This value system has attached to it certain word symbols. For example, the master narrative which governs the English-Canadian theatre institution is represented by such words as **culture** and **high art** which operate as ideograms and carry information with regard to certain values which we must endorse if we wish to feel included in the upper ranks of the cultural hegemony. These words inscribe in our discourse certain value systems which pertain to an appeal to **civilization**, to **progress** and to a collective need to maintain **social order**. This paradigm is elitist and exclusive. It has been disseminated through the cultural authority given to Matthew Arnold.⁴⁵ It has **colonized** our thinking about theatre in English Canada and is perpetuated in our discourse through patterns of reinscription and repetition. The data I have collected from this analysis is presented as Appendix A.

The discursive model for the popular theatre event is elusive. Unlike the literary tradition, the popular theatre tradition is **marginalized** in our **discourse**. It is called **paratheatrical** and therefore, conceptually, remains **outside the theatre**. Often popular theatre activities such as musical theatre are marked as **other** and are discursively categorized as belonging to the **performing arts mosaic** along with community theatre, Native ritual, multicultural theatre, dance and theatre for young audiences. Talking about the popular tradition **raises questions** about the institutionalized notion of **the theatre** in English Canada because it undermines the conventions and norms which have been inscribed in our discourse.

In order to examine the popular tradition in English-speaking theatre, which corresponds to subsection (b) of my hypothesis, I have developed six performances in text using another poststructural strategy, **intertextuality**, in conjunction with the methodology employed in Chapters 4 and 5. In these performances I have examined the historical significance of popular theatre in the context of English-speaking practice. These performances are like small experiments and are outlined in terms of strategies and observations.

In Performance I, I demonstrate the principle of intertextuality and in Performance II, I intertextually explore definitions of popular theatre. In Performance III, I chronologically mark the popular tradition in English-speaking theatre narratives, using as a resource selected texts which

pertain to specific historical periods or theatrical practices. The information from this performance is collected in Appendix B. Performance IV uses the database from Performance III to construct a model of the popular theatre event. Performance V also uses the data from Performance III and offers a comparison between popular and literary conventions. Performance VI recontextualizes the information gained about popular conventions in terms of the Second Wave Alternate Theatre in English Canada. By means of still video images from the productions, *Tears of a Dinosaur* (One Yellow Rabbit), *Doctor Dapertutto* (Theatre Columbus) and *Down North* (St. Ann's Bay Players), I use the vocabulary and concepts gained in this study to discuss negotiations between the popular and literary conventions in these representative theatre texts.

My conclusions (Chapter 10) are contextualized in terms of issues raised by postmodernism and postcolonialism, which are concepts that have influenced our theatre discourse, knowledge and contemporary practice. To reiterate from Chapter 1, I maintain that there is a distinctive **postmodern** theatrical gesture in English Canada and that the manifestation of this gesture is a **negotiation** between the **popular theatre tradition** and the **literary theatre tradition**. This postmodern practice is to be found in the theatre games of the Second Wave Alternate in English Canada.

In Performance III, I have placed English-Canadian theatre practice within the chronological mapping of English-speaking traditions. The issue

of **postcolonialism** is therefore relevant to this research; it seems to me that our longstanding investment in carving a national identity has become dependent upon gestures which throw over the traditions of our colonial past. My study appears to run counter to the postcolonial agenda which must be addressed.

During the course of my research into the Second Wave Alternate Theatre in English Canada, I explored several possible avenues which would help to explain its historical significance. I considered the effects of mass media, postliteracy, avant garde experiments in image theatre, performance art as well as the influence of postmodern and post-structuralist narratives. Each illuminated some aspect of the practice but did not speak to my dilemma: How do we think/talk about different theatre practices? Why is the new alternate troublesome? Should we take it seriously?

Obviously, the problem of the erasure of the popular tradition, which is fundamentally a performance tradition, is relevant to Canadian theatre history, both French and English. It speaks to the heart of the almost invisible controversy concerning the date for the first nonNative theatrical performance in Canada and North America. Few theatre historians are even aware that there is such a controversy.

In the Fall 1983 issue of *Theatre History in Canada*, David Gardner argues "The Case for 1583."⁴⁶ In this essay, Gardner challenges what most

theatre historians take it as fact: that "the confirmed date for the beginning of play production in Canada is 1606, when Marc Lescarbot's [drama], *Le Theatre de Neptune en la Nouvelle-France* was performed on the waters before the Habitation at Port Royal.⁴⁷ Lescarbot's play is a published text; it has value as a cultural product and can be used in teaching our theatrical history.

Gardner, however, suggests that there is enough evidence to prove "that there was mumming in Canada in 1583,"⁴⁸ which problematizes Lescarbot's claim. Because **mumming** is a popular theatre tradition, a **performance** tradition, there is no published playtext to support Gardner's thesis, although he has made reference to E.K. Chambers' detailed description of the practice in *The Mediaeval Theatre, Volume I*. Gardner has discovered documentary evidence for these performances in personal correspondence.

I have found that the **problem** of the popular theatre performance tradition speaks to the theatrical prejudice which limited Roy Mitchell's ability to find a place in the Canadian theatre establishment. It speaks to the difficulty we have in recognizing the colonial attitudes, which follow as tell-tale baggage, such terms as the **legitimate** theatre or **paratheatre**. It speaks to the difficulty we have in incorporating *The Dumbbells* (World War I), *The Army Show* (World War II), *Spring Thaw*, or the Charlottetown Festival into our historical narratives. It speaks to the marginalization of

Canadian musicals, Theatre for Young Audiences and community theatre events. The problem of the popular theatre tradition raises the issue: Why do we not take the case for 1583 seriously?

ENDNOTES

¹ This agenda is a modification of Renate Usmiani's alternative "criteria": *Second Stage: The Alternative Theatre Movement in Canada*, p. 2. Usmiani has identified what she believes to be "the most basic criteria shared by the [international] movement as a whole." Although this is perhaps a generalization of a very complex set of circumstances and motivations, her criteria have become a useful starting point for my research. Examples from the Second Wave will be taken from my field research concerning the three representative companies: One Yellow Rabbit, Theatre Columbus and St. Ann's Bay Players. This will serve to provide the reader with more background information for the three productions examined in Performance VI, in the second part of this dissertation.

² The second version of *Tears of a Dinosaur* was written specifically for a prearranged tour with the particulars of these venues known in advance; hence, a proscenium or picture-frame style was imposed on the set arrangement which put limitations on movement but was also exploited for the manipulation of the large puppet dinosaur and table (Interview with Blake Brooker and Denise Clark, March 26, 1990).

³ This phenomenon not only happens with The Fringe but also in Cape Breton, where followers will attend performances of the same production several times in neighbouring communities. This must be similar to those who followed the commercial tours in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

⁴ At the time of this writing, it has been reported in *Theatrum*, 42, (February/March 1995), that The Poor Alex Group: Theatre Columbus, Crow's Theatre and Theatre Smith-Gilmour are now without a home theatre. Mira Friedlander, "Growing Pains: The Changing Face of Toronto Theatre," pp. 14-17. Because of the group arrangement, these companies had to find rehearsal space outside The Poor Alex Theatre and were restricted on how long they could extend the run of a successful production. These arrangements hampered their ability to build cash reserves.

⁵ The relationship between The Poor Alex and Tarragon Theatre is documented in Johnston, *Up the Mainstream*, pp. 160-61. This venue imposes some specific audience expectations on theatrical productions because of this historical association and the consequent development of a Toronto **alternate audience** profile. Twenty years later, this audience is typically made up of **young, urban professionals** with money in their jeans to spend. Therefore, they are described by Johnston as "mainstream." In interviews, Ross and Cherniak seem content to develop their work for

this audience as an extension of their **community**, which also includes a university crowd as well as followers of clown-based theatre. Ross and Cherniak credit much of their funding success on the support of the first-generation alternate audience.

⁶ This person also happened to be the costume designer and an actor in *Down North*, Barbara Longua.

⁷ Interview with Ruth Schneider, July 30, 1990 and correspondence with Bev Brett, October 1990.

⁸ This sentiment is often quoted with reference to the first wave of alternate theatre and can be found in several sources including Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, p. 76.

⁹ Interview with Blake Brooker, March 26, 1990.

¹⁰ Ross and Cherniak speak of finding "the play" as part of their creative process. They look for the theatrical metaphor which will allow them to access thematic ideas within a fictive or game world (Interview March 9, 1991). Blake Brooker also used the dinosaur as a theatrical metaphor for the extinction of the nuclear family in *Tears of a Dinosaur*. When asked, he agreed with the game and play analogy for describing One Yellow Rabbit's approach to theatrical presentation (Interview March 26, 1990).

¹¹ This phrase was used by Michael Green and Blake Brooker (Interviews: March 9, 1991 and March 26, 1990, respectively).

¹² Quoted in Joyce Doolittle, "One Yellow Rabbit: A Profile" in *NeWest Review* (June/July 1989), p. 58.

¹³ Quoted in Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, pp. 74-75.

¹⁴ Thomas Leabhart, "Jacques Lecoq and Mummenschanz," *Modern and Post-Modern Mime* (London: Macmillan, 1989), pp. 88-107. Also, Gene Hayden, "Lecoq Tales," *Theatrum*, 26, (Winter 1991/92), pp. 17-20.

¹⁵ See "A Collective Tribute to Richard Pochinko, 1946-1986," Cheryl Cashman (Compiler), *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1991), pp. 37-38.

¹⁶ Bev Brett, Correspondence (October 1990).

References to the performance style and aesthetic conventions employed by Bread and Puppet include Sarah B. Hood, "Puppet

Government: Puppets as Political Expression," *Theatrum*, 34, (June/July/August 1993), pp. 12-16; Peter Schumann, "The Radicality of Puppet Theatre," *The Drama Review*, 35(4)(T132), (Winter 1991), pp. 75-83; Peter Schumann, "The Bread and Puppet Theatre in Nicaragua, 1985," *New Theatre Quarterly*, V(17), (February 1989), pp. 3-7; John Bell, "The Bread and Puppet Theatre in Nicaragua, 1987," *New Theatre Quarterly*, V(17), (February 1989), pp. 8-22; Lynn Sobieski, "The Bread and Puppet Theatre's *Woyzeck*," *The Drama Review*, 25(2)(T90), (Summer 1981), pp. 55-62.

¹⁷ Gyl Raby (Interview: August 20, 1990). Richard Fowler was associated with the Odin Theatre in Denmark, the company founded by Eugenio Barba, a disciple of Grotowski. Michael Green referred to this as the "Grotowski workshop" (Interview).

¹⁸ Interview with Denise Clark (March 26, 1990).

¹⁹ "Letter to The Canada Council Jury" (August 1988); "Letter to The Canada Council Jury," pertaining to the *Doctor Dapertutto* project (not dated, company files).

²⁰ These journals are well known for their focus on new theatre work. *Canadian Theatre Review* was founded in 1974 to articulate the work of the Alternate Theatre Movement and *Theatrum* was founded in 1985 to function as the voice of the Second Wave.

²¹ Raby interview.

²² *Lazzi* is pre-planned and rehearsed stage business marked by physicality and slapstick. It is initiated by improvisational playing but its effect relies on impeccable timing as well as virtuosity. Therefore, *lazzi* is well rehearsed and set to the point where it can be repeated and quoted at various times in the performance. This adds to the humour. Performers and their performed characters are often associated with repertoires of *lazzi* routines and companies can develop trademark *lazzi* turns. See Mel Gordon, *Lazzi: The Comic Routines of the Commedia dell'Arte* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1983).

²³ In one review of *Doctor Dapertutto*, the play was called a "comedy-melodrama...the cross-fertilization of serious content and comic style." Vit Wager, "Dapertutto production dazzles," *Toronto Star* (no date, company files).

²⁴ Merrill Denison had written a social-problem play about a poor Canadian "backwoods" or farm family, *Marsh Hay* (1923), but it did not see public performance until it was mounted in 1974 at Hart House Theatre, University of Toronto.

²⁵ Filewod, "Potted History," p. 2.

²⁶ The idea that stage images are generated by ideology was affirmed in taped discussions about each company's practice and process and is supported by documentation in the companies' files, and in particular, with regard to grant applications.

²⁷ "Immigrants" is the term used for residents "from away," mostly from the United States, who have come to Cape Breton as "back-to-landers"; many were draft dodgers but there are also those who chose to come to the Canadian Atlantic seaboard because they could not afford land in New England.

²⁸ Brett has outlined in her correspondence many of the advantages to being an amateur company, although her own status during the time of my research is best described as semi-professional. This issue always turns around access to funding and consequently requires that the company reassess its status on a regular basis. Lately, they have been receiving more provincial grants which support tourist industries. The Explorations grant, the success of *Down North* and consequent exposure undoubtedly enhanced The Players' credibility with the provincial agencies.

²⁹ Ross has described the role of clown as "the chaotic voice, the voice of unruliness and a childlike spirit of rebellion against authority" (quoted in Ray Conlogue, "Columbus Discovers New World," *Globe and Mail*, February 13, 1988, p. E5).

³⁰ Conlogue, "Columbus Discovers New World," p. E1.

³¹ See Katherine Allan, "Columbus and the Neutral Mask," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1992), pp. 20-25. In this case, the critic was looking for political correctness in her own terms; others could have made the same argument on behalf of a different politic. There are no heroes in *Doctor Dapertutto* — they are all clowns — so it is difficult to see the agon or debate in Aristotelian or literary terms. One of the other criticisms directed at *Dapertutto* was the lack of dramatic tension around Dapertutto's character. Ross and Cherniak were aware of this during rehearsals. Hence the role of Pearl (Cherniak) was expanded to give Dapertutto a stake in the

outcome. In other words, a subplot was conventionally incorporated to run parallel to the main plot as dramatic reinforcement. Another option would have been to keep *Dapertutto* as a Brechtian outside observer or social commentator on the proceedings, which I believe was the original plan.

³² Usmiani, *Second Stage*, p. 2.

³³ Discursively, "improvisational playmaking" has been subsumed into a category of "Canadian playwriting" in the literary sense. See Johnston, *Up the Mainstream*, p. 73; also, Bessai, Chapter 2, footnote #1.

³⁴ For example, *Doctor Dapertutto* was originally developed under a Chalmers' playwright's grant and the process for developing characters and situation was clearly improvisation. See Chapter 2, footnote #35 above. *Tears of a Dinosaur* began as a performance project at The Banff Centre/Interarts Programme. The facilities of the Centre allowed the company to develop a soundtrack, the puppets and some of the costumes which were used in the final production. The script that was workshopped at Banff was dropped but the technical resources were reworked into the new production.

³⁵ Cited above, Chapter 2, footnote #22.

³⁶ The exception to this is the *Doctor Dapertutto* script written by Ross after the Chalmers' workshop. Ross's intentions were to write a literary text because at the time she was wondering if she could. The documents in the company files indicate that their previous productions were "set" improvisations or "scenarios." Ross admits, however, that the text for *Dapertutto* strategically remained open to onstage improvisation, clown *lazzi* or business and choreography.

³⁷ At the time of my field research, Blake Brooker of One Yellow Rabbit had no intention of publishing his plays. His position was that they did not actually fill their potential until they were staged. His final version of *Tears of a Dinosaur* was written as he saw it in his mind theatrically, complete with stage images (Interview: March 26, 1990).

Brooker's plays have recently been published under the title, *Ilsa, Queen of the Nazi Love Camp and Other Plays*, Joyce Doolittle (Ed) (Red Deer: Red Deer College Press, 1993). He has included in his introduction the following proviso:

The play texts in this book are skeletons, not whole, living, breathing entities. They are only the beginning of an event that to be fully appreciated must be realized with

time, performers and, finally and most importantly, an audience. I view these texts as plans for my colleagues and myself to create performances. They are maps which contain the information required for a voyage that is only complete when conceived, imagined, executed and presented (p. 12).

³⁸ See Paul Leonard, "Towards a New Dramaturgy," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Winter 1986), pp. 44-50.

³⁹ Extra funds do come from corporate sponsorship which has become critical for the survival of all professional theatre companies. At the time of my field research, Jeremy Long indicated that there was a ceiling upon funds for Alternates and therefore asking for an increase in production budget would require satisfying other criteria. Blake Brooker expressed concern with this policy in the context of his company's growth and potential to supply audiences with unique "cultural products." Gyl Raby also confirmed that Canadian granting agencies would unlikely fund "on spec" a company doing "image theatre." The exception to this rule is the experimental work by Robert Lepage (Interviews: October 31, 1990; March 26, 1990; August 20, 1990, respectively).

⁴⁰ This "colonialism" refers to cultural products from Britain such as Shakespeare and Shaw, as well as the technologically mediated ones from the United States: TV, radio and movies.

⁴¹ See Bronwyn Drainie, *Living the Part: John Drainie and the Dilemma of Canadian Stardom* (Toronto: Macmillan, 1988) and Diane Mew (Ed.), *Life Before Stratford: The Memoirs of Amelia Hall* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1989).

⁴² Since the time of my field research, One Yellow Rabbit has made arrangements with a producer to take the remount of their play on racism, *Ilsa, Queen of the Nazi Love Camp* to New York.

⁴³ Paul Litt maintains that opening our view of ourselves to a perception of our multiplicity has undermined the liberal humanist foundations upon which our cultural institutions have been founded. *The Muses and the Masses and the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1992). The institution/establishment's response to this observation is represented in the critical response to this text, described as a misreading of

historical evidence, by Mavor Moore, in *Theatre Research in Canada*, 14(1), (Spring 1993), pp. 104-106.

⁴⁴ This is the Litt's thesis in *The Muses, the Masses and the Massey Commission*.

⁴⁵ The following are published articles on the influence of Matthew Arnold's cultural theory on Canadian institutions brought to my attention by Denis Salter. Margery Fee, "Canadian Literature and English Studies in the Canadian University" in *Essays on Canadian Writing*, 48, (Winter 1992-93), pp. 20-40; Clifford G. Holland, "Canada Greets the Apostle of Culture," in *Dalhousie Review*, 63(2), (Summer 1983), pp. 242-55; Patricia Jasen, "Arnoldian Humanism, English Studies and the Canadian University," in *Queen's Quarterly*, 95(3), (Autumn 1988), pp. 550-66.

⁴⁶ Gardner, "Forum: David Gardner Argues the Case for 1583," pp. 226-237.

⁴⁷ Gardner, p. 226.

The fact that this play is in French is not at issue in this challenge, although this should be noted. The issue is one of origination, isolating the historical first and what theatrical conventions were followed in early performance. It is interesting to note that Lescarbot's play could also be described as a water spectacle, but I am not aware of an historical narrative which does not contextualize this drama in literary terms.

⁴⁸ Gardner, p. 228.

CHAPTER 4

NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES IN THEATRICAL TRADITIONS
USING POST-STRUCTURAL STRATEGIES FOR ANALYSIS

4.0 How We Talk about Theatre: The Conceptual Model

Following basic communication theory,¹ when we talk about **theatre** in English Canada we produce a set of symbolic signs in some medium — words (oral or written), photographs, graphs, blueprints, sketches, posters, sound recordings or video — to convey information which pertains to this particular **cultural institution**,² its theory and its practice. With each different symbolic medium, we employ certain **conventions** for **representing** what we are trying to convey; that is, we follow conventionalized **codes** which give the communication **coherence**. In game theory, Koestler calls this unifying system of codes a **matrix of rules**.³ These rules allow us to **make meaning** (to code) and to **interpret** (to decode) information. So that when we talk about **theatre practice** in English Canada, we attempt, not only to differentiate, describe and define our theatre experiences, but also to code these experiences within a coherent matrix of rules in order to understand the significance of these experiences and to share our **understanding**. This understanding is what we call **knowledge**.

When we attempt to organize and code our experience around shared **conventional norms**, such as a shared understanding about what is considered **normal** English-Canadian **theatre**, we assign to our experiences

common knowledge or **common assumptions** about our theatre practice. Only then can we circumvent the "infinite regression of 'I know that you know that I know, etc.'"⁴ For example, when we assume that there is a **shared meaning** for the mental concept of **the theatre**, we accept that the descriptive particulars of this concept have faded into a body of knowledge which is held in common by the members of our **theatre institution/community**. The specific definition for **theatre** becomes **invisible** because it is assumed we all know what we mean. It is assumed that the meaning of the word **theatre** is shared, therefore the word functions as if it were self-explanatory.

The **language** we use to talk about the theatre in English Canada is **received**: we are **educated** to use word symbols such as **playwright**, **actor**, **scene** or **role** and to interpret this language according to **established codes**. These codes form **relationships** within a **structural system** which is called a **model** or **paradigm**. When the model, as a coded linguistic system, is assumed because it is common knowledge, it **transcends** practical experience and functions as a **theoretical ideal** as well as a shared definition.

My diagram of the **literary theatre tradition** (Fig. 1) is a paradigm of a coded structural system. I have strategically modelled the theatre production process which this tradition follows, so that we can think of it as analogous to a **ladder**. The diagram says that when this model is followed

during the theatremaking process, there is a **hierarchy of relationships** between the various producing functions. Also, the diagram indicates that these relationships yield to the ruling **authority of the literary playtext** as the originating point of **reference** for every element of the staged production.

When we talk about the theatre using this model for our conceptual paradigm, we are assuming that theatre practice is the **interpretation** of a literary form; that is, we think of the director, actors and designers as interpreting (decoding and then recoding theatrically) the words of the playwright/author. What is made concrete on stage in the theatre production is a material reference to the word sign in the literary text. When we think of directors, actors and designers as **interpreters**, we imply that they do **not generate their own dramatic meanings** during a performance. Rather, using theatre sign clusters, they make concrete **the author's/playwright's** intended meaning which originates with the word.⁵

When I ask about the image of the **hierarchical ladder** as a representation of how we think about conventional theatre production, I have found that response is immediate **recognition**. This familiarity demonstrates not only that we are educated to employ common codes but also that, within these codes, we are trained to **perceive** theatre and its practice in conventional ways and to **organize our thinking** about theatre according to **dominant meanings and paradigms**. I have found that most

English-language texts, written within this century, which are about theatre production are organized around the same functional categories represented in my model: playwright; director; actor; set designer; costume designer; lighting designer; sound designer; stage manager; and crew.

Two examples of English-language texts on play production circulated in English Canada and separated by almost sixty years illustrate the tenacious dominance of the literary model: C.B. Purdom, *Producing Plays: A Handbook for Producers and Players* (1930),⁶ and Lee Alan Morrow and Frank Pike, *Creating Theatre: The Professionals' Approach to New Plays* (1986).⁷ The headings in the table of contents for Purdom's handbook read: "The Producer [director]; Choosing the Play; The Actor; Rehearsing; Stage-Management; The Stage; Scenery; Costumes, Wigs, Make-up, Etc.; Lighting; Finance; The Audience; The Uses of Criticism." In the Morrow and Pike text, chapter headings are: "Playwrights; Directors; Actors and Actresses; Designers; Theatre Companies and Producers; Critics." Many other examples could be cited all conforming to the hierarchical categories of the literary model. The only discrepancy found in this ordering pattern was the rank of the producer/director rather than the playwright in Purdom, which represents this author's interest in **producing** known plays rather than **creating** new plays.

When we accept without question the dominance of the literary model as normal and obvious, we fail to appreciate that some traditional theatre

practices do not fall within the categories delineated by this paradigm. We also fail to appreciate that when we assume the literary tradition as our conceptual definition, we accept and normalize a bias in favour of a set of **social, political and epistemological implications**. This bias is carried as an **ideological** value system encoded in the word sign **theatre**. The theatre community's allegiance to a certain conceptual ideal will, in turn, influence English-Canadian theatre practice. In particular, this bias will influence the validation of certain practices by the theatre institution and our common knowledge about our practice in general.

Obviously, some traditional theatre practices do not begin with a literary playscript. Clowning, circus and agitprop street theatre do not rely on the interpretation of playtexts to generate drama theatrically. The meanings constituted in these theatre images originate on stage as **performance** rather than as **literature**. These meanings are generated using **theatrical** rather than **literary poesis**. How we label these practices indicates where we place them in relation to our idea of **normal theatre**. The word **fringe** marks theatre practices which fall on the **margin** or **edge** of **theatre**; the word **paratheatrical** marks nonliterary practices which fall **outside** the normal concept of **theatre**.

When, in Chapter 2, we considered English-Canadian theatre history, we saw that **challenging** normal theatre conventions and dominant practices is possible in practice and theory. It is possible to pose new

performance genres such as **symphonic expressionism** or to suggest, as Roy Mitchell did in *Creative Theatre* (1929), that **theatre** should not be thought of as a "handmaiden" to **dramatic literature**. However, we also noted that our theatre institution offers no guarantees; different approaches will not automatically be assimilated into our common knowledge about **theatre**. Different practices tend to disrupt the stability and regularity of the normalized paradigm for theatre. Until they become sanctioned, theatrical differences have typically been seen as radical or naive **anomalies** without significance or influence outside their occurrence as isolated events. Because they do not fit neatly into the dominant coded system, these practices are **generally not talked about** except in terms of historically "interesting" **workshops** or **experiments**. Unless these events can be intellectually constituted in some way to conform to the dominant model, they will remain **outside** the body of conventional practice and institutionalized knowledge about our theatre and theatre history. Non-literary forms of theatre obviously resist assimilation by a dominant model that privileges a playtext.

4.1 Conventional Wisdom, the Dominant Theatrical Model and Theatre Practice: Knowledge / Power / Practice

Sociologists and anthropologists tell us that, in order to maintain the continuity of a community such as our English-Canadian theatre institution, conventionalized **common knowledge** about **the theatre** is handed down

to future generations as **given conceptual truths**. These truths need little justification or clarification because they are presented as **normal**. We seldom discuss our understanding of the term **theatre** because we believe that, the practice of **theatre** was, at one time, **accurately named** and **truthfully described**.

If we are looking for an **authority** for what we know about our theatre, we usually point to Aristotle and the religious/ritual origins of the theatre in ancient Greece. We outline our **English colonial heritage** and its place in the development of what is known as **Western civilization** with foundations in Greek and Roman **culture**. We demonstrate that there are correspondences between our theatre architecture and practice and our understanding about Greek and Roman theatre production. As well, we usually refer to the canon of English-language drama and its genealogy in Greek and Roman drama. These are our theatrical truths.

Seldom do we ask about the possibility of dramatic performance in Canada or England before the arrival of cultural influences which are categorized as **civilizing**. Our interest in the performance traditions of aboriginal peoples is relatively recent. And when we look for significance in these events, we remain true to our conventional ways. We tend to distance ourselves from the emotional release, renewal and spiritual understanding that people find in the process of **pretending** or **performing** their stories and beliefs. Rather, we focus on Native artifacts as products with **residual**

value, in terms of dollars as well as aesthetics. We talk about distinctively designed masks, drums and stylized dances as theatrical properties and choreography used to **interpret myths** or **Mystery Plays**. What began as an integrated process of sacred performance is reconstituted as material product, because of the way we, the dominant Western culture, conventionally think about **theatre**.⁸

When we are asked about social conventions, we usually recognize that the dominance of one rule over any other is **arbitrary**; we accept that following a rule is only **necessary** if we wish to maintain **social order**. Yet the conventional paradigm which dominates and regulates our knowledge of the theatre does not seem arbitrary. Because the idea of **theatre** is conceptually linked to authenticated and authorized truth-telling, beginning with Greek civilization, we forget that our assumed definition for theatre is just a normalized convention. We have received the word **theatre** as a **given** symbol and this symbol, we are taught, represents theatre experiences that are **universal** to Western cultures. These rules take on the appearance of **natural laws** and natural laws are not arbitrary; they are **necessary** and **essential**.

In 1931, Harley Granville-Barker, a practitioner admired by the Canadian theatre establishment,⁹ gave a series of lectures at Cambridge which began with "The Natural Law of the Theatre." Granville-Barker maintained that there are "not to be laws of playwrighting [*sic*], but only

the natural laws of the medium in which the plays exist, the laws of the theatre."¹⁰ Our literary model has become the **natural order** which puts **necessary** constraints on our practice. Not only is the literary model **normalized** within our institution, but it is also **naturalized**. When a convention becomes natural law, it no longer requires justification; rather, as a preordained law, it is beyond question or scrutiny.

When we assign without question the literary paradigm to our concept of the theatre, we naturalize a particular definition and **limit the range of possible ideas** which we can associate with theatre practice. As my diagram illustrates, the literary paradigm **contextualizes** the word **theatre** within a contained structural system or **frame of reference**, and this structural paradigm performs a significant **referential function** that has political as well as practical implications. For example,

- I. As I indicated earlier (1.7), the symbolic representation of the literary model refers to dominant ideologies and values inscribed or coded into the cultural system called **the theatre**. These codes organize the **sanctioning of theatrical practices** according to a conceptual **hierarchy** which designates authority over the production process and influences a company's access to the institution's resources.
- II. These codes also regulate **institutionalized knowledge about our theatre**: what will be taught; what research questions will be encouraged; whose work will be reviewed; what will be published as theatre texts; whose narratives and which debates are included in which journals and periodicals. Also, the institution regulates how this knowledge will be circulated. Boundaries are drawn around what can be said so that we do not stray too far from the shared references and stable paradigms of our common knowledge.

- III. Finally, these inscribed codes **establish a set of criteria** which allow us to **classify** and **assign value** to theatre experiences. Most theatre criticism is structured according to the literary paradigm. Readers and theatregoers require these familiar reference points to interpret analysis generated by the institution; they rely on the institutionalized norms to set standards so that they can make **informed** decisions about what they will and will not attend. Valuation according to the hierarchy of the literary model also comes into play when artistic directors are setting their seasons: What playwrights write plays suitable for our audience? What directors offer "hot" production concepts? What actor can best interpret the character? What designer will stick to the requirements of the text as well as the budget? In general, the coded paradigm provides referential justification for the allotment of all our theatrical resources.

4.2 Analysis of Discourse Using Poststructuralist Strategies

The research which has led me to develop a model for the literary tradition and to construct the above theoretical analysis has been based on poststructuralist strategies for critical interpretation. I have cited (3.7) Michel Foucault as an authority for my theory; those familiar with readings in poststructuralism will recognize traces of Foucault's argument in mine. Foucault sought through his research to bring to our attention the three-way relationship constituted by power, knowledge, and practice within any social institution.¹¹ Because Foucault's research is not common knowledge within the discipline of Theatre History, I have looked for support for his theories in other academic corners. This strategy has led me to consider the dynamics of power/knowledge/practice inside the wider cultural context of

communication and symbolic representation. My methodology has also been influenced by readings in feminist and semiotic analysis. Feminist and semiotic theory has touched upon all areas of symbolic representation and is especially useful when delineating literary from performance aspects of theatre.¹²

In today's world, it often seems that the **visual** modes found in the electronic media and commercial advertising have become our primary processes for disseminating information. Still, we must not lose sight of the central importance of **verbal** communication in maintaining social and epistemological order. Even when we are contemplating ideas conveyed through sketches of costumes or in production photographs, we are usually required at some point to organize our interpretation, response or analysis through the semiotic system of language.

Traditionally the formal study of language and the interaction of language has been referred to as the study of **discourse**.¹³ The term **discourse** and its derivatives¹⁴ occur frequently in poststructuralist theory. The survival of the theatre institution is dependent upon the sustained economy of a theatrical discourse (1.7). Poststructuralist theory provides us with **strategies to analyze** the discourse which delineates English-Canadian theatre. It has been acknowledged that poststructuralist terminologies often sound like elitist jargon because they are not yet part of our common knowledge. It is also recognized that this questioning mode is

destabilizing and disquieting to those who have invested time and energy into establishing and promoting English-Canadian theatre. As well, this methodology which encourages reflexive criticism appears destructive to those who are concerned because theatre, and especially Canadian (English and French) theatre, is given tenuous recognition within the academic establishment. Because poststructural strategies disturb the stability of our theatrical discourse, I previously assigned to this critical questioning the role of CHAOS (1.3).

The poststructuralist approach is beneficial in that it opens our discourse to critical scrutiny. It enables us to recognize the conventional rules and paradigms which regulate our institutionalized practices and **delimit our knowledge**¹⁵ about these practices by governing our discourse. As well, poststructural strategies draw our attention to traditional performance practices such as clowning and puppetry, which are usually marginalized or erased by the theatre institution and yet are of vital consideration when discussing productions of the Second Wave alternate theatre. These strategies, I will show, also allow us to **mark** these practices as belonging to the discursively elusive **popular tradition** within the English-speaking theatre.

At this point, I hope it is evident to the reader that the subject under contention in Robert Wallace's discourse, *Producing Marginality*, to which I

referred in Chapter 2, is the coded conceptual paradigm for **theatre** and the matrix of rules which dominate our theatre practice.

Expanding on the power/knowledge/practice relationship found in discursive formations, Chris Weedon in *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory* explains: "Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning....They are ways of constituting *knowledge*, together with the social *practices*, and [the network of] *power* relations which inhere in such knowledges."¹⁶ Discursive constructions are formed as the result of transparent or invisible social and political processes. When examined or **deconstructed** these processes can be made apparent and subject to scrutiny.

4.3 Poststructural Analysis as Gestic Criticism

In this chapter, I have described how discursive patterns become so **familiar** and **normal** that they seem almost **invisible**, as if they were **natural**. At the same time, if we look for them we find that these patterns leave **traces**. When we map these traces, they can be identified as the **rules** which regulate the discourse. In order to see these traces it is necessary to **defamiliarize** the rhetorical conventions and coded word signs and make **visible** (to **show**) how the idea was fabricated by the process of symbolic representation.

The word **defamiliarize** should alert the reader acquainted with acting theory to recognize that there are similarities between **Brecht's**

concept of gestic acting and poststructural methodology. In critical theory, **defamiliarize** is a translation of Brecht's *Verfremdungseffekt*, which theatre practitioners often interpret as **distancing** or **alienation-effect**.¹⁷ Brecht's term has been traced to a critical strategy devised by the Russian Formalists called *ostranenie* or **making strange**.¹⁸ In any case, the final task of the actor and the critic is the same: to **show** the **performance of rhetorical strategies** as they represent social and political forces at play within the stage image or verbal text. Brecht called this practice the demonstration of the performed **social gest**.¹⁹

Each **gestic sign** is a semiotic **index** because it **points to** a social process. The gestic index not only indicates to the reader the representation of a social type, but also contextualizes this symbolic type within the phrase: "This group of signs has been constructed in such a way as to make it readable according to common social conventions."²⁰ These social conventions normalize the symbolic representation within **authenticating** or **truth-telling** rhetorical conventions. An example of such a convention is the one which links the origins of our theatre to theatre practice in Ancient Greece. These devices veil the fictiveness of symbolic constructions and allow us to think: "**This is the way it is.**"

In justifying the role of the gestic critic, Brecht wrote: "The eye that looks for the gest in everything is the moral sense."²¹ For Brecht, gestic criticism reveals the attitudes and ideologies in social relationships which

seem the most **natural**.²² When all the signs fit neatly into conventional codes, the reader/audience is lulled into the realm of **familiar perceptions** where meanings are self-evident and the dominant codes are reinforced and affirmed. But, when elements are **emphasized** in some way so that they are "raised from their transparent functional roles to a position of unexpected prominence,"²³ these signs are **estranged** or **distanced** from their ordinary codified functions.²⁴ These interruptions remind us that representations are not given (i.e, they are not natural); but rather, they are produced and therefore, cultural (i.e., political, social and historical).

Poststructural critics refer to the process of critical analysis through defamiliarization as the **problematization of the text** for the purpose of **deconstruction**.²⁵ The conventions which unify the text and give it coherence and the coded vocabularies used in the text are destabilized; questions are raised around these conventions and codes which break up familiar rhetorical constructions and open the text to endless possibilities and considerations. The text becomes the site for **exploration and discovery**.

When I problematize a text and open it to the consideration of our theatrical traditions, the normalizing discursive processes, or **rules**, are made **visible**. I am able to mark what is considered **normal theatre practice** and what is **not normal, other, or paratheatre**. I am able to map the conventional paradigm for the theatre which regulates the way we

talk about theatre in English Canada. And by selecting a wider context, that is, all English-speaking theatre practice, I am able to map the popular tradition which is also part of our heritage but is generally trivialized within our theatre institution.

4.4 Isolating the Rules Within Texts: Authenticating Conventions

The work of isolating the dominant paradigm for theatre in English Canada was inadvertently facilitated for us through Robert Wallace's critical observations which, as he states in his preface to *Producing Marginality*, were influenced by readings in critical theory.²⁶ Because I was able to quote Wallace's paragraph and present my graphic interpretation of that paragraph without performing the close analysis which we now associate with gestic criticism, it seems necessary at this juncture to offer further empirical evidence in support of my theoretical findings. If there are governing rules such as I described, the rhetorical conventions and coded vocabulary which affirm the dominance of the literary tradition should be evident within the texts which pertain to theatre practice in English Canada. I am looking for what we recognize as the familiar or normal within our conceptualization of **theatre**. This coded norm will be repeated in our discourse because it is drawn from our theatrical common knowledge. Because this dissertation is being written in the context of theatre history, I am limiting my consideration to historical narratives. For

the historian, familiar codes become interpretive frameworks for the organization of collected information into historical narratives. For the reader of these narratives, because the frames of reference are common knowledge, the codes and conventions facilitate the decoding activity. In other words, we are able to interpret the information through normalized patterns.

As we have seen in our discussion of Brecht's notion of the social gest, all texts are social products and are constructed through the use of **rhetorical conventions**. When these conventions bridge the unavoidable discrepancy between symbolic fabrication and factual truth-telling, they are called **authenticating conventions**.²⁷ When discourse is constructed within the authority of authenticating conventions, readers accept that what the writer/author says is **serious** and **truthful**. Without these conventions, writers would not be able to represent new experiences or argue a different perspective effectively because they would not be able to access the body of common knowledge in a few coded phrases.

Everyday experience teaches us how difficult it is to communicate an unusual occurrence when the speaker and the listener do not share points of reference. As students of theatre and writers of theatre history, we realize how vital these conventions are to our communication. Recently, however, some researchers such as myself have found that there is valuable insight to be gained when these conventions are studied in terms of their social and

political implications. These conventions can influence theatre practice because they structure how we talk about our practice. In this dissertation, I have already referred to several concepts which operate as discursive authentication.

In Section 1.4, I pointed out that the **theatre of illusion** functioned as the aesthetic norm for theatre games. We can expect to find traces of this norm within our historical narratives, although we must be aware of how the aesthetic games rules can be modified by the code of the rhetorical rule at play. For the most part, when we are discussing the theatre of illusion, the aesthetic rules of **Realism** will be considered usual while the conventions of **nonrealism** or **Expressionism** are considered different. We find that nonrealistic theatre games are validated if placed under the label **avant garde** or **Modernism**. Intact in this linguistic reconstitution is the idea of the **unity of the representation**, that is, **the illusion of an enclosed theatrical world**. This observation is explored fully in Theodore Shank's *The Art of Dramatic Art*. As well, Oscar Brockett reaffirms this convention in his historical consideration, *Modern Theatre: Realism and Naturalism to the Present*.²⁸ Within the conceptual norm of the **modern theatre** are found the rules which affirm the unity and closure of the dramatic world on stage, whether this world is real, only possible or even improbable. When we talk about theatre practice in terms of what is normal, we represent through our assumptions and word signs, the

dominant conventions of the theatre of illusion, coded in such words as "represents" "believability" "portrayal" "unified" and the familiar phrase, "suspension of disbelief."

Authenticating conventions call on the axioms of common knowledge to support the seriousness and plausibility of the information conveyed. As I indicated in Section 4.1., Aristotle and the religious/ritual **origins of theatre and drama** in Ancient Greece are usual points of departure for historical narratives. These texts will affirm their truthful voice by establishing the continuity between the information they present and the founding tenets of Western civilization, especially as they pertain to the theatre and drama which we believe was chronologically **first**.²⁹

During the nineteenth century, the principles of **civilized life** were reinforced by a **biological model** which compared the development of cultural expression to the life cycle. As if it were a living organism, the culture of a nation could be traced "in stages" from immature ("childish" "primitive" or "savage") beginnings through "adolescence" to final "growth" and "maturity." Richard Paul Knowles identifies the analogy of a biological or evolutionary process as the "Darwinian belief."³⁰ Loraine Weir adds that the biological model is further reinforced by equating evolutionary growth with the concept of "progress."³¹ Cultural maturity is not only an indication that our primitive origins have given way to civilized acculturation, but also, that this cultivated civility denotes that we have moved closer to a

Romantic ideal of **goodness** which may be coded in words such as "beauty" and "truth" indicating secular salvation.

A text can be authorized as truth by establishing an interrelationship with the **canon** of English-speaking drama. In this case, **Shakespeare** or **Shaw** become authoritative references, especially in English Canada where a significant portion of our theatre resources are spent in support of Festivals celebrating the names (and plays) of these nonCanadian playwrights. I have found that our historical narratives usually make some reference to a recognized canon of dramatic literature. They also contribute to the **canonization of playtexts** by treating selected plays as subjects worthy of research. Alan Filewod's rediscovery of the agitprop plays of the 1930s is a case in point for English-Canadian drama. Of course, Filewod cannot simply state that these plays are valuable in themselves; he must call on other supporting authorities, such as their connection to Living Newspaper techniques or Piscator's political theatre, to lend authenticity to his case.

In Theatre History, names of **historians** with international reputations serve as truth-telling **authorities** because their names and perhaps their ideas are familiar, accessible and carry weight within the institution. Contextualization of our theatre history in terms used by Oscar Brockett, Allardyce Nicoll or Eric Bentley lend the text the credence of collective wisdom. The authorities I have used in this dissertation point to a

certain body of knowledge which may or may not be absolutely sanctioned by the institution but which indicate an organizational pattern and bias that I hope will lend authority to the plausibility of my argument.⁸²

In Canada, because we were once a colony, the idea of nationhood has occupied our thinking ever since the first notions of a separate Canadian identity were planted in our collective consciousness. Denis Salter has demonstrated in his essay, "The Idea of a National Theatre," how the ideal of **nationalism** has "become a form of cultural and political orthodoxy,"⁸³ within the English-Canadian theatre institution/establishment. In Section 2.0, I suggested that the sanctioning of the **Alternate Theatre Movement** in the 1970s came about because most alternate theatre gamemakers strategically sought to contribute to the **national** body of **Canadian dramatic literature**. At the same time, some theatre practice advanced the cause for a **national professional theatre** that would be made by and for Canadians. This concept of nationalism refers to a singular transcendent entity, the Nation, a synthesis of two founding cultures, French and English, that can also accommodate the regional differences of the provinces and territories. Today our idea of Canada is symbolized by the words "multicultural mosaic," but the pluralist ideal of unity and cohesiveness within a national whole still functions in our discourse as an authenticating rhetorical convention.

By noting references to the development of our theatre within the contexts of an **evolving** nationhood, the **progress** toward a true (and singular, although bilingual and plural) Canadian identity or a **mature** national cultural expression, the reader is alerted to a conceptual piggyback. We find that the growth or progress model works in conjunction with the enhanced possibility of a distinctly **Canadian** theatre and drama. By implication, because the ideas of evolution and progress are inscribed with the codes that signify Western civilization, it follows that a **progressive** and **civilized** population should support the ideal of a **national cultural identity** through the advancement of aesthetic practices such as **theatre** and **drama**.

By citing Shakespeare and Shaw or Eric Bentley and Oscar Brockett, even when we state clearly that we wish to examine theatre events within a **Canadian** context, that is, on Canadian terms rather than global or European, we continue to sustain without question the conventional authority of traditional Western ("pan-European"³⁴) thought. We continue to compare our theatre events to models from dominant ("older") cultures. In the context of English-speaking theatre, these models have originated in London and New York, the sites of **urban** theatrical progressiveness and maturity which can be historically and culturally linked to Athens and Rome.

The process of conventional coding **universalizes** experience within a common set of ideals or **values** that can be described as the **master code** or **metanarrative**. As I indicated in Section 3.7, the master narrative which encompasses our assumptions about the ideal of nationalism and civilization is called **liberal humanism**.³⁵ The institution maintains social order by asking its writers/coders, when describing or interpreting experience, to focus on **similarities** which conform to the valued ideals and to devalue or trivialize **differences** when interpreting events or information. We may express ourselves theatrically as individual and particular Canadians, but, when we interpret these events, we filter the experience through an organizational pattern which sets up hierarchical relationships and gives priority to a certain matrix of sameness. This organizational pattern we call the **common sense interpretation**; it imposes a **preferred reading** upon what we perceive and our interpretation of experience. The privilege given to a **Canadian** point of view, as an authorized and authenticating convention, subsumes the values and ideologies inherent in the dominant social structure of our colonized past. I intend to demonstrate in this thesis how our colonization continues, ingrained in our thinking about **culture** in general and **theatre** in particular and to address the issue of our postcolonial consciousness in my conclusions.

4.5 Isolating the Matrix of Rules: Coded Vocabularies

When we examine specific historical narratives about theatre practice in English Canada, we can expect to find the authenticating conventions which I have outlined above and others that have not yet surfaced in this study. I contend that all authenticating conventions will support the paradigm for literary theatre which regulates access to our institutionalized discourse. Furthermore, these conventions will be supported by **coded vocabularies**, words chosen consciously or unconsciously because they are familiar and carry the concepts of our assumed or common theatrical knowledge. We have seen above how the coding of vocabulary works within a complexity of verbal equivalencies to sustain the aesthetic norm of the **theatre of illusion** as well as the ideal of **nationalism** in our historical narratives.

As signs, words are extremely flexible because their meanings are determined by convention. They are **empty** carriers of information: as signs, they lack intrinsic meaning. Word signs must be coded. Their one natural characteristic is ambiguity. In order to interpret words, we look for **context**, the matrix of truth-telling rules, to **put boundaries around the range of possible and plausible meanings**. Because my analysis is based on a strategy of interpretive questioning, words are considered as either **marks of conventional thinking** or as **marks which indicate difference**

depending on their relationship to the matrix of coded rules found in the text.

We must also note that words are contextualized by the information codes which construct the text as a specific historical event, that is, by the text's **historicity**. The notion of historicity complicates the idea of authentication or truth-telling because historicity acknowledges that a coded text will be inscribed with the **concerns of the day**, that is, with social and personal issues which are particular **to this place, to this time** of writing. For example, in Denis Salter's essay, English-Canadian theatre practice is traced historically as a patterned relationship caught inside the modified codes used to represent the idea of a **national theatre**. These linguistic modifications correspond to changes in the implied meaning of the word **national** and reflect a shifting interpretation of the concept of **nationalism** which, in turn, is inscribed by larger political issues and cultural values. As straightforward as the idea of a national theatre seems to us, Salter demonstrates the interpretive complexity caused by the historicity of word signs.

I have gone to some length to outline my analytical strategy because, as I have said above, I believe the process of deconstruction is often dismissed as destructive rather than constructive. Deconstructive strategies seem to undermine the real accomplishments made using traditional approaches. In my consideration of our theatre history texts, I am not challenging the integrity of the information collected or the positive

intentions of historical researchers who chose conventional methodologies. In the first instance, the **what** is not at issue, only the **how**: how we have interpreted the data we collect and how we symbolically represent that data. With regard to the matter of positive intentions, I believe we must address how we talk about theatre in English Canada in order to understand the differences of Second Wave alternate theatre practice. We must also be aware of the political gest behind the fact that Second Wave theatremakers have chosen to employ practices which can only be categorized as **something other** than the theatrical norm; we conventionally call these practices **paratheatrical**. Conventional thought continues to support a set of cultural values which linguistically, philosophically and materially discriminate between our **two theatrical traditions**. It has become apparent to me that while Second Wave practitioners strive to remain within the institutionally inscribed rules for sanctioned **theatre**, they choose to play against these rules by engaging the **theatre** in an **interplay** with the **paratheatrical** or nonliterary popular traditions and, through the creative process of **bisociation**, have created theatre games with a discernible difference. If we are to understand the significance of Second Wave theatre, we must understand what that **something other** than the **theatre** represents.

ENDNOTES

¹ My theory is supported by general texts on communication: for example, Rowland Lorimer and Jean McNulty, *Mass Communication in Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1987); Marshall Blonsky (Ed.), *On Signs* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1985); James W. Carey, *Communication as Culture: Essays on Media and Society* (Boston: Unwin Hyman, 1989); Hugh Dalziel Duncan, *Communication and Social Order*, 2nd ed. (New Brunswick: Transaction Publishers, 1985) and specialized studies such as Sol Worth, *Studying Visual Communication* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1981); E.H. Gombrich, *Art and Illusion*, 4th ed. (London: Phaidon Press, 1972).

² I have introduced the term **institution** earlier (1.7), but for the purposes of this chapter, my working definition using a sociological context is found in Burns, *Theatricality: A Study of Convention in the Theatre and in Social Life*:

All social structures maintain themselves by means of an apparatus of institutional forms which provide individual members of society with codes of behaviour and grammatical rules for reading the behaviour of others. Institutionalized behaviour is merely the formal patterning of conduct which relieves us of the overwhelming task of deciding our every conscious act as though it were entirely unprecedented. Every separable element of this institutional apparatus is tested, repaired, strengthened or weakened every time it is invoked (pp. 34-35).

³ Koestler, *The Act of Creation*, pp. 38-42.; also supported by Barthes, "From Work to Text," p. 57.

⁴ Burns, p. 28.

⁵ Poststructuralists will question this view because it is understood that meaning cannot be contained when signs are translated (or interpreted) from one sign system to another. Direct correspondence between abstract symbols is impossible. I have described the process of the **conventional** literary tradition as if it were a simple closed transaction. This explanation follows **conventional** thought and is still considered valid. See Alter, *A Sociosemiotic Theory of Theatre*. Alter bases his semiotic study of the

theatre or the literary model because he believes that the standard process for **mainstream** theatre practice is one of **interpretation** (pp. 1-12). Alter recognizes and delineates between a **referent** and a **performant** function for all theatre signs. But, since he values the mainstream literary tradition, Alter maintains that the meanings generated in performance must not undermine the meanings which convey the story's narrative, character development and theme. That is, the performance aspects of the stage signs should not be in conflict with or in any way undermine their function as references to a playscript. Alter's study demonstrates the existing tension between the two theatrical traditions and how they encounter each other in contemporary productions, reminding us that the literary (referential) and the theatrical (performative) functions coexist in all theatre image clusters. The question is: Does one tradition govern our institutionalized practice?

⁶ C.B. Purdom, *Producing Plays: A Handbook for Producers and Players* (London: J.M. Dent and Sons, 1930).

⁷ Lee Alan Morrow and Frank Pike, *Creating Theatre: The Professionals' Approach to New Plays* (New York: Vintage Books, 1986).

⁸ For example, see Richard Courtney, "Indigenous Theatre: Indian and Eskimo Ritual Drama," in Wagner (Ed.), *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions*, pp. 206-15. It is significant to note that Courtney, a drama educator, speaks in conventional ways from the institutional margins as is evident by the placement of his essay in a section of performance leftovers which did not qualify within the dominant idea of Canadian theatre practice.

⁹ The influence of Granville-Barker on the way we think and talk about theatre in English Canada should not be underestimated, as is evident in Betty Lee's history of the DDF, *Love and Whiskey* and Denis Salter's research for "The Idea of a National Theatre," in Robert Lecker (Ed.), *Canadian Canons: Essays in Literary Value* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1991), pp. 71-90. Granville-Barker is credited with having "grabbed Michel St. Denis as judge for the Final" in 1937 (Lee, p. 164). St. Denis then went on to facilitate the establishment of the National Theatre School in 1960.

¹⁰ Harley Granville-Barker, *On Dramatic Method* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1956), p. 14. On the cover, the book is touted as "a rediscovery of the laws of the theatre." It also includes a section on the determining laws of the **theatre of illusion** (pp. 26-28). It is also possible, in this text, to interpret **theatre** (and its governing laws) as meaning the architectural struc-

ture that is imposed on the performance. The word is strategically ambiguous.

¹¹ Foucault's texts which I have used in this research can be found in the Bibliography. Secondary texts which have added to my understanding of Foucault's theory are: Gilles Deleuze, *Foucault*, Seán Hand (Trans. and Ed.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1988) and Mike Gane (Ed.), *Towards a Critique of Foucault* (London: Routledge, 1986).

¹² In the Bibliography, feminist and semiotic texts which do not appear as cited references can be found listed according to author as follows: (Feminism) Sue-Ellen Case, Annette Kuhn, Teresa de Laurentis; (Semiotics) John Fiske and John Hartley, Dick Hebdige.

¹³ For clarification, I include here a working definition of discourse contextualized by semiotics from Kaja Silverman, *The Subject of Semiotics* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), pp. 103-104:

'Discourse' has here a very wide application, encompassing not only speech, writing, and artistic activities of all sorts, but any articulation, even one which takes the form of an architectural structure or a road map. It does not imply any conscious intention, although it does require both a sender and a receiver. The sender may be as unlocalized as culture, or as specific as a poet. However, even in the latter instance it would be a mistake to attribute too much autonomy to the speaker, who is always simultaneously spoken elsewhere (pp. 103-104).

For the purposes of this dissertation, I will be limiting my analysis to verbal discourse only.

¹⁴ The study of the way we organize language or the how of language is called the study of **discursive formations**. The way we talk about theatre in English Canada relates to the body of **discourse generated by and about the English-Canadian theatre institution**. This discourse is **delimited**; that is, it is **limited by established parameters** which give the institution definition and structure. Such parameters are "English-speaking theatre" and "generated in Canada." Because English-Canadian theatre is **limited and contained**, we can describe the body of discourse circumscribed by the institution as its **discursive field**.

As a social member of the institutionalized group, I am expected to follow or assume the **discursive conventions and codes**, the "rules," already established by the institution. Anyone who aspires to enter the **dis-**

curative field will have to demonstrate a familiarity with these **rules of discourse**. Otherwise, they will not be understood or taken seriously.

¹⁵ See footnote #14 above.

¹⁶ Chris Weedon, *Feminist Practice and Poststructural Theory* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1987), p. 108 (Italics mine).

¹⁷ Elizabeth Wright, *Postmodern Brecht: A Re-Presentation* (London: Routledge, 1989). See also, William Gaskill, *A Sense of Direction* (London: Faber and Faber, 1988), p. 51.

¹⁸ Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama*, p. 17.

¹⁹ In Brechtian theory, it is implicitly understood that all symbolic representations are **social products** and, therefore, are tied to a **socially dominant mode of production**. See Terry Eagleton quoted in Dolan, p. 113. In "On Gestic Music: What is a Social Gest?" Brecht wrote: "The social gest is the gest relevant to society, the gest that allows conclusions to be drawn about the social circumstances." *Brecht on Theatre*, trans. John Willett (London: Methuen, 1964), p. 105.

²⁰ See Burns, p. 103.

²¹ Willett, p. 36, footnote #1.

²² Wright, p. 20.

²³ Elam, p. 17.

²⁴ cf. Barbara Drennan, "Theatre History-telling: New Historiography, Logic and the Other Canadian Tradition," in *Theatre Research in Canada*, 13(1-2), (Spring/Fall 1992), p. 46-62. In particular, see p. 56-60 for a practical application of my methodology, contextualized by Marshall McLuhan's theory of media.

²⁵ This strategy follows that proposed by Elin Diamond, "Brechtian Theory/Feminist Theory: Towards a Gestic Feminist Criticism," in *The Drama Review (TDR)*, 32(1)(T 117), (Spring 1988), pp. 82-94. See also the strategy proposed by Richard Southern: "extending [Brechtian] theatrical practice to theatre history" in *The Seven Ages of the Theatre*, p. 113.

²⁶ Wallace, pp. 8-11.

²⁷ Burns, pp. 93-125.

²⁸ Oscar Brockett, *Modern Theatre: Realism and Naturalism to the Present* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1982).

²⁹ Richard Southern does not call on the authority of Greek theatre and drama when he constructs his historical narrative. Rather, because Southern places the essential elements of theatre in the hands of the costumed **performer**, he does not use traditional literary or archaeological evidence to support his thesis. He offers us a different story and a different body of evidence (pp. 118-121).

³⁰ Richard Paul Knowles, "Voices (off): Deconstructing the Modern English-Canadian Dramatic Canon," Lecker (Ed.), *Canadian Canons*, p. 92.

³¹ Loraine Weir, "Normalizing the Subject: Linda Hutcheon and the English-Canadian Postmodern," in Lecker, p. 183.

³² Calling on the authority of fringe thinkers can trivialize one's argument, cause confusion or outright rejection if the institution's regulatory power is stable. However, notation of these same marginalized voices can indicate a shift in thinking and epistemology. I have come to realize that the challenge to traditional thought can never be sustained if it is read as **rebellion** ("adolescent") or **revolution** ("extremist" "nihilistic" "anti"). Rather, as Foucault maintained, our collective epistemological modes and rules will only **transform** over time through a not very subtle and often misunderstood process of political **negotiation**.

³³ Salter, "The Idea of a National Theatre," in Lecker, p. 71.

³⁴ Leon Surette, "Creating the Canadian Canon," in Lecker, p. 18.

³⁵ In his essay, Denis Salter implies that the "ideal of nationalism" was culturally coded by colonial narratives originating in Britain by a group of cultural missionaries, led by Matthew Arnold, who advocated "cultural enlightenment...brought like civilization...to the uneducated masses" (p. 89). Cultural historians have recently questioned the code of values inscribed by Arnold's **liberal humanism**. In my analysis, I have marked this **master code/metanarrative** as "humanism (values)." See also Chapter 3, footnote #45 above for published articles which study Matthew Arnold's influence on English cultural institutions.

CHAPTER 5

NEGOTIATING DIFFERENCES IN THEATRICAL TRADITIONS (II):
THE POSTSTRUCTURAL ANALYSIS

5.0 Introduction

In this study, I have analyzed three different types of texts dealing with English-Canadian theatre history: Murray Edwards' *A Stage in Our Past: English-language Theatre in Eastern Canada from the 1790s to 1914*, published in 1968, the year after Canada's Centennial;¹ the 12 volumes (24 issues) of the journal *Theatre History in Canada*, published between 1980 and 1991; an essay by Gerald Lenton-Young, "Variety Theatre," in *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914*,² published in 1990.

Murray Edwards' *A Stage in Our Past* is recognized as the first comprehensive historical narrative about English-Canadian theatre practice and therefore has become an authoritative reference. The text is limited by its specified time frame as well as its geographical considerations and Edwards has since discovered some inaccuracies in the information he presents in his book. However, the theatre institution continues to value this text because, as Mavor Moore states in his introduction, *A Stage in Our Past* established the parameters for considering Canadian Theatre History as a worthwhile and serious endeavour. With this book, which was a reworking of his Ph.D. dissertation (Columbia), Edwards opened for Canadians a field of academic research that treated historical studies, contextualized by theatre practice,

as significant. Equally as important, Edwards provided strategies for interpreting historical information which were to be followed and repeated in later theatrical studies. For the purposes of this research, Edwards' strategies present us with the gestic key to the matrix of institutionalized authenticating conventions and coded vocabulary which we are interested in isolating and making visible. My analysis of Murray Edwards' *A Stage in Our Past* not only draws our attention to the matrix of rhetorical rules which are at play in his text but also leads us to identify the interpretive code which becomes a conceptual ideal for Edwards' use of the word **theatre**.

To place *A Stage in Our Past* in a wider range of historical discourse, I have also read Mary Elizabeth Smith's *Too Soon the Curtain Fell: A History of Theatre in Saint John, 1789-1900* (1982);³ Chad Evans' *Frontier Theatre: A History of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska* (1983);⁴ and E. Ross Stuart's *The History of Prairie Theatre: The Development of Theatre in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1833-1982* (1984).⁵ Although these texts were written at least fifteen years after Edwards' and these authors consciously viewed their respective subjects from a regional rather than a national perspective, their narratives overlap the historical time frame considered in *A Stage in Our Past*. In retrospect, although I did not read these texts specifically with poststructural strategies in mind, I believe it is possible to say that the

same authenticating conventions and coded vocabulary which I will be discussing below can be found in these texts and that they lend support to my analysis. I invite the reader to consider all of our theatre history narratives, including Benson's and Conolly's *English-Canadian Theatre* (1987) within the parameters outlined in this and the preceding chapters.

The authenticating conventions found in *A Stage in Our Past*, which build upon those I outlined in Chapter 4, become a structural framework for the analytical interpretation of each article in *Theatre History in Canada / Histoire du Théâtre au Canada*, the learned journal published by the Association for Canadian Theatre History/Association d'Histoire du Théâtre au Canada. In this structural analysis, I have noted the occurrence of authenticating conventions along with their supporting vocabulary and this data appear in a table format found under the heading "Appendix A: Theatre History in Canada."

Representing the Academic arm of the English-Canadian theatre institution, *Theatre History in Canada*, a "scholarly publication,"⁶ is considered to be the authoritative voice for Canadian theatre historians. The Association of Canadian Theatre Historians was formed in 1976 to promote the study of Canadian Theatre History according to recognized "systematic methods."⁷ In 1980, Richard Plant and Ann Saddlemeier took up the editorial challenge to produce a periodical which would not only "promote research...[but also] provide a forum for the exchange of thoughtful and

studied opinion, thereby encouraging the formation of an informed critical perspective within which to view Canadian theatre."⁸ In 1992, the title of this publication was changed to *Theatre Research in Canada*, reflecting a corresponding name change in the association and a shift to incorporate a broader mandate. The closure offered by this name change allowed me to examine the journal over a finite publishing period. My analysis (Appendix A) shows clearly how the publication has changed over twelve years: the graphic simplicity of the early years is in dramatic contrast to the complexity of at least the last six issues. Poststructural concerns which I have raised in this dissertation surface in vocabularies as well as in subject matter which change significantly over the years. Hence, it was not surprising that the first issue under the new name, *Theatre Research in Canada*, was exclusively about methodology. In this analysis, I only considered articles about English-language theatre and included those titled "Forum"; I excluded book reviews.

My reading/decoding of the essays in *Theatre History in Canada* also encompasses what is presented in my data as "Marking Difference: Vocabulary and Concepts." This material serves as an information base to lead into subsequent chapters of this dissertation. In this chapter, the "marks of difference" come into play with my reading of Gerald Lenton-Young's essay "Variety Theatre." The coded vocabulary used by Edwards leaves its familiar trace throughout *Theatre History in Canada* and is

repeated, as convention, by Lenton-Young. My analysis of Lenton-Young's narrative focusses, in particular, on the term **legitimate theatre** as it relates to nineteenth-century theatre practice in English Canada. From this point, I hope to begin to articulate the **other** theatre practice, the **para-theatrical**, which is the **popular tradition**.

5.1 *A Stage in Our Past: An Analysis*

What I am looking for in this analysis are the points of textual repetition and similarity which I have determined are the traces that indicate an organizational convention or rule; these traces are analogous to what is known in mathematics as a **constant**. We have considered three types of discursive constants: the organizing conceptual paradigm or definition (the literary theatre tradition), the authenticating conventions and the coded vocabulary. The conventions and the vocabulary serve to reinforce the literary paradigm. The historical concerns of the day (the historicity of the text as event) also contextualize the codes and vocabulary and serve to limit the meanings generated by word signs.

In considering the historicity of *A Stage in Our Past*, we find along with the publishing information on the overleaf of the title page, the logo of Canada's Centennial and the designation: "Published on the occasion of the Centennial of Canadian Confederation and subsidized by the Centennial Commission." The significance of Centennial Year cannot be overlooked

when considering cultural projects which attempt to enhance our knowledge of ourselves as **Canadians**.

Don Rubin provides useful insight when placing Edwards' text in its historical context. In the first issue of *Canadian Theatre Review*, Rubin wrote an article called "Creeping Toward a Culture: The Theatre in English Canada Since 1945" (1974)⁹ with reference to the issues which were of concern in the theatre community during Centennial year, he explained:

By 1967...it had become apparent that Canada had a theatre in its midst and innumerable subsidiary organizations had developed around it. The only question existing at the time was one of identity, most of the theatre being produced was clearly not Canadian. That is to say that it was not a theatre of Canada but merely one which existed in Canada. The element that was obviously missing was the *playwright*, the writer who could speak clearly, firmly, and intelligently in a native voice...

The Centennial also helped the Canadian theatre in a number of concrete ways, most particularly in the national funding of a great number of new *theatre buildings* across the country. The St. Lawrence Centre, although not actually opened until 1970, was nevertheless a Centennial project.¹⁰

It was thought that national identity would best be served theatrically through the writing of literary dramas: authentic Canadian theatre required Canadian plays to interpret. As well, a commitment to a national Canadian

theatre was literally made concrete by funding theatre buildings on a regional basis. According to Rubin, the major concerns were writing **plays** and building **playhouses** in which to present these plays. How are these concerns translated into the organization of Edwards' research?

When we look at any text, the organizational frames of reference should be evident from the outset as readers are expected to use these as preferred interpretive codes. For example, we find that in *A Stage in Our Past*, the table of contents tells us that the first chapter (33 pages) will cover "Players and Playhouses," that is, actors and theatre buildings which are linked by the common element of **plays** in production. The second chapter, "Touring Days" includes 18 pages on Canadian touring players, 22 pages on tours which presented "New Movement" **plays** by Ibsen and Shaw, and five pages on **play** censorship. The balance of the 170-page text, other than appendices, bibliography and index and excluding the six pages headed "Conclusion," covers "The Poetic Drama" (verse **plays**) and "The Canadian Reflection" (**plays** which represent Canadian experience). It does not require math skills to see that throughout the book, the main point of reference will be plays weighted in favour of a literary context rather than performance.

The "Foreword" written by Mavor Moore, who was at the time "General Director, St. Lawrence Centre for the Arts,"¹¹ offers a note of credibility and support from the institution/establishment.¹² Moore also

reinforces Edwards' narrative focus. He describes this history of plays and players/interpreters as if it were about Canadians participating in a progress or journey toward the valued goal of doing "their own thing"; that is, writing "native plays" and producing them in well-equipped Canadian playhouses (p. viii).

When we view Murray Edwards' text in terms of the performative, the action which predominates throughout is **to lament**. Quoting from Nathan Cohen, Edwards supports the notion that "theatre as something of value to a discerning public has never counted in the life of English-language Canada" (p. ix). In his "Introduction," Edwards dismisses out of hand any "delusion" that his research will reveal "a Canadian Ibsen, Shaw, or Shakespeare...my conclusion would merely confirm the suspicion that early Canadian theatre lacked literary significance" (p. ix). This disclosure is further authorized by quoting Northrop Frye's simile which associates "our innocence of literary intention" with "a mating loon" (p. ix). The lament arises from the realization that there appear to have been "no artistic triumphs" (p. 3) to talk about when relating the history of the English-Canadian theatre between 1790 and 1914. Edwards employs these references and authorities as a call or invitation to the reader to join him in a discursive experience which will present information that is new but is offered in such a way that it will be recognized and understood. For the

reader, the familiar coded language provides many reassuring interpretive sign posts.

Notwithstanding the fact that Edwards found little evidence of theatre that could be called "artistic" or "literary," he did find evidence of "theatre." Edwards found enough material about theatrical activity in English Canada to warrant a full-length book that talks about this practice. We are, therefore, led to the conclusion that this research is grounded by the premise that there existed a kind of "theatre" between 1790 and 1914 but that there is also something known as **the theatre**, which was sadly absent during this time.

We are told that the first type of "theatre," which dominated English-Canadian practice during the time frame under consideration, cannot be appraised **seriously** when considered in an "**international context**" (p. ix). It is assumed that, as readers, we understand what these international standards are because Edwards does not explain them. We also must assume that these international standards are **aesthetic** because we are asked not to consider artistic worth but rather, to put this theatrical activity in a **social context**. Edwards asks us to gather from this historical research "fascinating insight into the life and cultural needs of a new country" (p. 3).

What is this valued **theatre** that Edwards points to in his lament? He answers this question most directly in his conclusion: it is the theatre of

"the creative writer" (p. 166). In the early days of English-Canadian theatre "the playwright was, more often than not, divorced from the theatre" (p. 167). Leading the reader through his historical narrative to this conclusion, Edwards reinforces the value placed on the literary tradition by offering familiar interpretive frames of reference, such as the chapter headings listed above, which also authenticate the text. These conventions repeat and form patterns within the discourse and establish the literary paradigm as the governing conceptual ideal for **the theatre**. For the reader, it is understood that this **theatre** is **serious** as well as **normal**.

Once we recognize the rhetorical terms and conditions laid out in the table of contents and the author's introduction, we can trace how the factual information is organized to lend reinforcement and logical inevitability to the conclusion. Using the example cited above, because Edwards finds theatre lacking in relation to international standards, he chooses to view his material from the "Canadian point of view" (p. xi). Then, by equating the Canadian point of view with the idea of nationalism, Edwards avails himself of the common assumption that national identity can be realized in a national drama. Edwards' strategy coincides with the strong national feeling evident in 1967 and he admits that this "emphasis on nationalism" and "identity" became a lens through which he viewed our theatrical past in the hope of finding "beginnings of our present drama."¹³

When he takes the role of social rather than aesthetic historian, Edwards generates an enthusiasm for his material and a genuine fascination with the culture of the pioneers which I found infectious. In general, his lament is softened by a sense of the bittersweet.¹⁴ For example, Edwards displays open admiration for the theatricality and good business sense of the Marks Brothers, a family touring company which considered Christie Lake in the backwoods of Ontario as home. Of course, he qualifies his remarks by dismissing their "artistic aspirations" (p. 48). As well, when he constructs a comparison between the Marks Brothers and the company of Albert Tavernier and Ida Van Cortland, he must return to the measure of literary value and to aesthetic as well as international standards. The Marks Brothers "freely adapted copies of second rate melodramas," while Tavernier and his company performed those "classic melodramas" which we would recognize as falling within the English-language dramatic canon (p. 48). As performers, Tavernier and Van Cortland are placed on a higher cultural plane:

From the beginning, both revered the theatre and looked on the acting profession in the highest possible terms. They tended to dismiss considerations of monetary return and sought to dignify themselves by assuming the roles of dedicated artists (p. 48).

To today's reader, this passage presents a Romanticized image of the struggling actor. At the same time, the words point to a set of conventions and assumptions which are still part of our common theatrical knowledge.

In *A Stage in Our Past*, the development of a national theatre and culture is associated with the concepts of **evolution** and **progress**, a convention discussed in the previous chapter (4.4). The idea of a **professional** Canadian theatre is described in terms of "maturity" (p. 36). As the nation comes of age, it is assumed that **amateur** theatre activity will naturally generate professional activity and Edwards can only interpret the Canadian reliance on foreign theatre professionals as "artificial" (p. 3).

Mature theatre is also associated with the **conventions of realism**, in particular with the playwrights Ibsen and Shaw. Again, the international context becomes the aesthetic point of reference. Edwards calls on the authority of the English theatre historian, George Rowell, to demonstrate that the "new movement" brought "respectability" to the theatre (p. 57). For Canadians, however, the Realist aesthetic has added value. Plays which create "a distinctly Canadian impression" (p. 130) draw, in dramatic representation, a social portrait of our national identity. Traditional theatrical wisdom suggests that we can learn about social attitudes and experiences from theatrical productions which create the illusion of reality by "increasing the naturalness of stage setting, developing authentic accents

of ordinary speech and reflecting something of their own society and times" (p. 57).

According to Edwards' argument, if Canadians had supported dramas which subscribed to the principles of literary Realism, they would have demonstrated their maturity and progress. According to Edwards, these conventions would appeal to the more sophisticated in the audience because they produce an **intellectual** theatre and not mere **entertainment**. Before 1914, Canada was "too young" for a theatre of its own (p. 170) and our reliance on the "imitation of foreigners" (p. 167) and our demand for "wholesomeness" and "entertainment" only perpetuated our "childhood" (pp. 167-170). In Canada, Ibsen's plays could not find an appreciative audience even in the **urban** centres where the educated and sophisticated audiences (the leisured class) are expected to reside. Instead, audiences laughed and critics found Ibsen's plays unpleasant in spite of their "high art" label (pp. 63-73). Shaw fared no better; critics and audiences were "confused" and Shaw was labelled a "vulgarian" (pp. 73-75).

Authenticating conventions are necessary because theatre historians, who are attempting to communicate information truthfully and logically, must code their texts so that meaning can be made through recognizable, credible patterns. The isolation of these familiar conventions may seem straightforward enough and yet, because the text manifests a **social gest**,

the underlying mental paradigms for concepts such as *theatre* may be veiled by the transformative processes of rhetoric.

In Edwards' text, I suggest that there are two distinct definitions for *theatre* at play. I have called one the "theatre" and the other **the theatre**. The "theatre" existed as social and historical fact within the time frame that was the subject of Edwards' research. This "theatre" was organized as the norm by a system of actors, audiences, dramatic performances, buildings, regulations, conventions and traditions, as well as discourse.¹⁶ However, it did not represent the hegemonic norm when Edwards was writing in the 1960s. The hegemonic norm through which Edwards interpreted his historical material is what I have called **the theatre**. It was this **theatre** that Edwards, as a Canadian theatre historian, was expected to value.

To problematize further the general idea of theatre in Edwards' text, when we think about the kind of theatre games he was hoping to find in his research, the "progressive" European literary models of Ibsen and Shaw must also be dismissed. Although at the time of writing Edwards may have valued Realist aesthetics and intellectual content, he valued Canadian authorship more.¹⁶ It seems that Edwards was hoping to find evidence of theatre practitioners — in particular managers, actors, critics and especially playwrights — who were **doing something different** from the hegemonic norm (i.e., were offering a **Canadian alternative**). When he found no evidence of this kind of alternate to the theatre norm, Edwards writes: "We

generally find Canadians to be rather shy about the *avantgarde*" (p. 169); "In Canada there was no experimentation" (p. 170). He borrowed Northrop Frye's term and labelled our Canadian "conservatism" and "wholesomeness," the "**garrison mentality**" (p. 168).

The pattern Edwards lays out for the development of professional theatre in English Canada follows logical cause and effect. Amateurs from the British military garrisons stationed in Canada along with other loyalists put on plays from the English-language canon. Rather than encourage their own to form professional companies, the arrival of American and British commercial "entertainers" offering familiar fare, allowed the colonists to sit back and passively receive a "foreign culture." Instead of demanding "serious dramas" (Canadian or other), Canadians bought into the foreign "entertainment" package which offered "variety" in the form of operas, spectacles, pantomime, farce and melodrama on a grand scale, although the quality was questionable. Consequently, by the end of the nineteenth century, theatre practice was controlled by foreign commercial monopolies called **syndicates** which sent out touring shows featuring either a star performer or a star production such as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Individual Canadian performers were rare and usually had to leave Canada to establish a reputation. Canadian theatre managers and touring companies found it difficult to remain solvent. As we have seen, the most successful Canadian company was the Marks Brothers, pure "entertainers" who went

from being hucksters to magicians to "producing full-scale melodramas" (p. 48). Although it would seem that amateur activity subsided with the arrival of professional companies, Edwards indicates that amateurs regularly shared the stage with the professionals. It appears then that the story of the amateur theatre in the nineteenth century has yet to be written.

Theatre venues, in the nineteenth century, were generally found in multipurpose buildings; often they were on the top floor above a saloon or, for more respectable amateur performances, in civic halls. The first buildings used exclusively as theatres were built in Montreal in 1825 and in Toronto in 1840. These were isolated enterprises. Although these buildings did facilitate ongoing theatrical activity in their respective cities, Edwards ascertains "that the cultural visionary who may have seen the value of introducing professional theatre as a cultural stimulant, was lacking as well" (p. 37). "We must remember that the prevailing mood was anti-theatre. There was little interest in providing a home for native talent....The Canadian dramatist and especially the poetic dramatist, was rarely able to have his play staged" (pp. 28-31).

Because we rhetorically equate theatre with drama in a **linguistic drama** < **theatre collapse**, Edwards is able, at this point in his text, to shift his historical consideration from theatre practice to an extensive examination of Canadian dramatic literature. This collapse is further strengthened

by the inscribed value system and **theatre** ideal which privileges dramatic literature and considers the literary arts as the centrepiece of a nation's **art and culture**.¹⁷ The creative source for making meaning in the (valued) **theatre** lies with the playwright's literary skills. Edwards writes: "In England and the United States [the commercialization of the theatre] was balanced by a concern for the art of the drama" (pp. 36-37). "The main cause [of the absence of rapport between Canadian actors and Canadian writers] was the lack, among practising theatre people, of dedicated souls who viewed the drama as an art form" (p. 84).

This coded vocabulary which associates dramatic literature with "art" "culture" "dedication" and "balance" points to the **metanarrative (liberal humanism)** which dominates our institutionalized cultural practices, including theatre. At this point in our analysis, it is important to realize that this metanarrative authorizes the codes and conventions inscribed in the text and lends support to the governing conceptual paradigm of the literary tradition. Any challenge to the authority of the metanarrative through an alternate **practice**, including the writing of an alternate discourse which does not follow the established conventions and codes, plays against the institution's sanctioned body of **knowledge** and constitutes a challenge to the structures which hold and control the **power** of that institution. We could say that *A Stage in Our Past* is a politically correct text for its time, according to the sanctioned orthodoxy of the English-Canadian theatre institution.

5.2 *Theatre History in Canada: A Structural Analysis*

Because *Theatre History in Canada* represents the academic arm of the English-Canadian theatre institution, I anticipate that the **theatre** which I have described as the **interpretive norm** in Edwards' study will be visible as the **hegemonic norm** in the historical narratives published in the journal between 1980 and 1991. Since publication began after the sanctioning of the Alternate Theatre Movement in the 1970s, I also anticipate that Canadian historians will be interested in the **alternate practices** which were only in the air when Edwards was writing his book. These researchers will not necessarily challenge the institution by writing outside the methodological conventions, but some will be interested in describing practices which have historically been viewed as different. These practices could predate those of the sanctioned Alternate Theatre Movement. They will appear as different subjects because of their status as **other than the norm**; perhaps they are coded as "experimental" or "avant garde," to indicate a practice which has broken the hold of the "garrison mentality." Studies on Herman Voaden or Roy Mitchell would fall within this category.

Before I began my reading of the articles in *Theatre History in Canada*, I also expected that historians would expand on the research introduced by Murray Edwards and would examine theatrical **entertainments** which dominated the professional theatre during the nineteenth century. In Appendix A, by using (**), I have indicated those articles which

include subjects introduced in Edwards' *A Stage in Our Past*. In spite of these added expectations, my hypothesis remains intact: that historical concern will continue to focus on English-Canadian dramatic literature or the interpretation of dramatic literature in English-Canadian theatre productions. Traditionally, it follows that the study of plays in production also includes the sites of production or theatre architecture; therefore, playhouses become legitimate research subjects.¹⁸

Following the parameters of *A Stage in Our Past*, I categorized each article according to its subject matter using the terms "plays" "players" and "playhouses." Obviously not all research fell under this code, although most could be assigned a variation of these headings. In nineteenth-century research, the pattern is interrupted by studies on theatre managers; in the twentieth-century research, the manager is replaced by the director.

It is interesting to follow how research topics build upon each other and open new doors to new subjects by establishing a discursive relationship with prior material. The research on the Art Theatre/Little Theatre Movement, which includes studies on the alternate practices of Voaden and Mitchell, is a case in point.

The first instance of the authoritative citing of an article found in a preceding issue of *Theatre History in Canada* is in "Shakespeare on the Montreal Stage, 1805-1826" (3(1), (Spring 1982)). John Ripley refers to Owen Klein's article, "The Opening of Montreal's Theatre Royal, 1825" (1(1),

(Spring 1980)). When we find references to prior material, we can assume that the earlier work has been assimilated and is accepted as a source of common theatrical knowledge. I believe this analysis of *Theatre History in Canada* is a fair record of how our theatrical knowledge has changed over the years.

The list of titles and topics in Appendix A points convincingly to the dominating conceptual paradigm of the literary theatre and the collective concern with "plays," their "interpreters" and their "productions." To begin to trace the pattern of repeated conventions and coded vocabulary required at least two readings of each article because the habits of a preferred reading are hard to break. I do not claim that my analysis is definitive by any measure, but it is meaningful.

In the later issues, it is evident that writers of history are not only articulating different practices but they are also beginning to challenge conventional approaches to history-telling. These articles are rhetorically complex: for every familiar reference there follows something different, such as a reference to contemporary critical theory or to a new international authority. At the same time, this research is still grounded by the authenticating conventions, recognizable interpretive frames and familiar coded vocabulary. The number of entries under "coded conventions" keeps pace with those in "marking differences," supporting my contention from

Chapter 4 (4.4) that authenticating devices are always necessary if a writer hopes to bring new ideas into the institution's discursive field.

Building from the conventions found in *A Stage in Our Past*, I have articulated twenty-three (23) different authenticating conventions in operation. Obviously one article will not employ all of them. These conventions are coded by strategically selected vocabulary and in most cases this vocabulary is straightforward and points to a familiar authority or concept. The authenticating conventions function as authorization for the text as if the writer is saying: "This is why you should pay attention to this subject matter"; or, "This is why you should believe I am telling the truth."

The following is a list of the conventions I have identified from *Theatre History in Canada (THIC)*:

Historical authorization

- i) historical or research "first" ("last" "greatest");
- ii) "primary": subject's own words, newspapers, documents
- iii) footnotes: text information is outside "common knowledge"; glosses, further explanation, authorities
- iv) research authorities: cited in footnotes or in text, glosses
author cites:
 - *THIC, A Stage in Our Past*
 - Canadian theatre historians
 - international authorities
 - authorities from other disciplines
- v) reference to
 - the origins of theatre (Greece and Rome)
 - the origins of theatre and drama in Canada (e.g., M. Lescarbot)

Context

- vi) theatre establishment:
 - Canadian representatives
 - people, organizations
- vii) international: delineates aesthetic standards
- viii) nationalism: coded "Canadian" "identity" "experience"
- ix) social context
- x) philosophical/ideological: restating of "social context"

Binary oppositions

- xi) professional/amateur
- xii) urban/rural

Literary values

- xiii) references to "text": the text as a set of givens to be staged
- xiv) canon: particularly Shakespeare and Shaw or Canadian drama
- xv) definition of drama as "conflict"

Theatre productions

- xvi) production hierarchy: "playwrights" privileged
- xvii) staging/acting as "interpretation"
- xviii) realism, illusion

Other

- xix) garrison mentality: coded as "conservative" "colonial"
- xx) growth model: "evolution" "progress" "biological"
- xxi) Alternate Theatre Movement: "drama"; "LIP" "OFY" grants
- xxii) Humanism (values): the coded metanarrative; "art" "culture"
- xxiii) theatre«drama (rhetorical) collapse: usually coded "plays"
 - the analysis of "theatre" becomes literary "drama"
 - coded as "dramatic arts" "performing arts"
 - "theatre" becomes "TV" "radio"

In my analysis, as I noted the **familiar** coded word signs used to support the authenticating conventions found in these texts, I also began to mark **differences** in vocabulary and concepts (with page notations). I found in the essays of the first issue that these different markings sometimes formed a pattern or constant which functioned as authorization for the text; this led me to isolate authenticating conventions which I had not anticipated. Patterns of differences also emerged. Those narratives which continued the research on nineteenth-century topics described many of the theatrical traditions which were part of the "entertainments" of the "theatre" that I found in Edwards' *A Stage in Our Past*. I listed under "differences" these traditions as well as techniques which denoted theatricality such as "special effects" "tableau" "mimic" or different processes for making theatre such as "collective creation" and "collaboration." I also took note of the coded words for "success" and phrases that indicated audience response or performer/audience relationships. As I went along, I found I could cluster these words so that they would play against each other in associations that helped to convey the meaning I was making from the text. This procedure was especially useful in my analysis of the later narratives which were rhetorically complex.

In this fourth column, I also marked the uses of the word "legitimate" when it was found with reference to theatre and drama. I noted as well when variations of "legitimate" were used in other contexts, usually to

indicate the act of sanctioning or making legal. Although it has been suggested to me that, when referring to theatre and drama, the word "legitimate" is a benign hold-over from the nineteenth century, the social gest performed, when this coded sign is used, points to discrimination and devaluation, if not to actual legalization. In the context of our theatrical discourse, the word "legitimate" has been neutralized and the political connotations forgotten. This neutralization has happened because the term is still part of our common vocabulary and therefore seems **natural**. The word is purged of its history; yet, it performs a useful function: linguistic legalization. When, through our discourse, we construct a "legitimate" theatre in English Canada, do we not also construct an "illegitimate" or "nonlegitimate"¹⁹ theatre by implication?

5.3 The Legitimate Theatre in English-Canadian Theatre Histories

In English-Canadian theatre discourse, the word **legitimate** takes on special significance, even though the word itself may seem innocuous because it has been naturalized within the institutionalized English-language theatre. This naturalization process has a genealogical history that can be traced back to theatre practices in England. That is, the term appears appropriate when applied historically to those theatre practices which were sanctioned as "legitimate" because of the licensing of theatres and the censorship of drama by the Lord Chamberlain in England. As a

colony, Canada was theoretically subject to the same laws as England but obviously, in practice, these regulations were hard to enforce.²⁰ At any rate, within the context of English-Canadian theatre and in spite of our current independent status as a nation within the Commonwealth, the term **legitimate** is still used without question or regard to specific historical reference. The term carries with it implied political meaning which is seldom addressed, although by using poststructural analysis, the common knowledge which informs this word sign can be made visible. The word "legitimate" becomes a red flag in our poststructural reading and points to the bias which is normalized in our thinking about theatre and places greater value on certain theatrical practices. Because logical reasoning is structured on binary patterns ("it is"/"it is not"), we can also read texts to mark the other, "not legitimate" theatre. The verbal representation of a "legitimate theatre" requires not only the concretization of what this **theatre is** but also what this **theatre is not**. As we have seen in historical narratives which treat nineteenth-century theatre practices as their subject, because the hegemonic norm was **not the theatre**, these texts tell us as much about the "not legitimate" "theatre" as they do about **the legitimate theatre**.

It is interesting to note that Murray Edwards' use of the term "legitimate" actually points to an unease or to problems he has with the idea of the "legitimate" in theatre. This is another indication of the authentic

enthusiasm he experiences when he discusses nineteenth-century theatre events. On page 24 in *A Stage in Our Past*, Edwards refers to a Mrs. Besnard and her singular lack of aspiration "to be a legitimate actress." We are told Mrs. Besnard was quite happy performing as a ball and knife-thrower. On the next page (p. 25), the word "legitimate" is flagged in the text because it has been placed in quotation marks: "A great deal of 'legitimate' entertainment was provided by amateur groups." This typographical variation conventionally indicates that the writer has some question about the word choice. Perhaps the word does not apply categorically or the word is standard but is problematic for the author. If we read the sentence orally, we would alter our voice in some way to indicate that attention should be paid to the word "legitimate" in this context.

Later in the text, we find that Edwards must again address the idea of the "legitimate" with reference to the "serious" actress, Ida Van Cortland. In the quotation cited by Edwards, Miss Van Cortland used the term herself to describe a certain kind of star performer and indicated that there was a connection between "legitimacy" and "dramatic repertoire." Edwards explains:

The term 'legitimate' usually referred to Shakespearean actors and productions, but as with most terms, it generally had a broader meaning, and it is safe to assume that Miss Van Cortland included in this category most blank-verse plays which formed the repertoire of the leading actors of the time (p. 50).

My concern over this one word may seem overblown and alarmist in light of the fact that on the surface the idea of a "legitimate theatre" in English Canada has not posed a serious threat to our theatre practice...or has it? The term has an historical genealogy and institutionalized significance. Therefore, as a word sign in our vocabulary, the term carries an authorized and authenticated meaning as well as its own stamp of political legitimacy. At the same time, the word carries associations recognized within the public domain which cannot be regulated or contained by authorized definitions. As we recall from Chapter 1, the hegemony's control is limited: as an individual, I am free to form a personal response and opinion to the value placed on the "legitimate." For the theatre historian, the term should become problematic when it creeps into our twentieth-century narratives without quotation or other typographical marks, which would "make it strange" or raise questions in the reader's mind.

Examples are readily found in recent texts which illustrate how we have normalized the idea of "legitimate theatre" in our discourse about English-Canadian theatre in the context of twentieth-century practice. In *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions* (1985), Howard Fink refers to the "Stratford Festival and other *legitimate theatres*"; also "Canadian playwrights...wrote...radio plays. Though their *legitimate plays* are better known."²¹ While the "Stratford" (code for Shakespeare's plays) "legitimate" association is straightforward because of the genealogy of the

term and the way Edwards uses it when talking about nineteenth-century practice in English Canada, I find the "radio"/"legitimate plays" relationship to be confusing. In a different article in the same text, Ray Conlogue talks about directors who do not work in film or TV, but who choose instead to "commit themselves to *legitimate theatre*."²² This quotation sheds light on Howard Fink's terminology. Conlogue does not imply "Shakespeare" or "blank verse plays"; his "legitimate," like Fink's, is *not* "film, TV" or "radio." We are, therefore, to assume that the "legitimate" is, in general, the "live stage." Logic would dictate then that the "not legitimate," in this context, is the electronic media.

Surprisingly, Robert Wallace also uses the term without quotation marks in *Producing Marginality*. In the 1980 essay "Growing Pains," Wallace describes the theatre scene in Toronto as having "a wide variety of acts [in taverns, bars and bistros] which complement the *legitimate theatres*."²³ Wallace does not indicate that the term was problematic for him at the time of writing. However, I would expect that, over time, when he became interested in poststructuralism and critically reflexive analysis that Wallace would show some discomfort when the idea of "legitimacy" comes to mind, a discomfort which Murray Edwards noted typographically. In his "Introduction," Wallace, with rhetorical zeal, refers to the financial success of *The Phantom of the Opera*. He credits the production with "the distinction of having the largest pre-opening ticket sales in the history of

legitimate theatre."²⁴ Wallace does not indicate he has a problem with the term "legitimate theatre" in this context. Is this musical-spectacle "legitimate theatre"? Or is it that the Pantages Theatre, a restored vaudeville house, is a "legitimate theatre"?

That the word "legitimate" is discursively slippery for writers and readers is only further demonstrated in Wallace's essay "Understanding Difference" (March 1988), written before his "Introduction" (December 1989). In this case, as I initially expected, Wallace **problematizes** the word by setting it inside quotation marks: "[Work by small theatres] 'develops' talent for the more established, 'legitimate' *theatre*."²⁵ I read the last two words to mean "the so-called legitimate theatre" and because they are contextualized by another familiar but questioned term ("develops"), the idea of "legitimacy" is further destabilized and estranged in this instance.

In his recent study of Victorian theatre in England,²⁶ Michael Booth admits that the terms "legitimate theatre" and "legitimate drama" are contentious even for **British** theatre historians. And as we have found, writers can get caught in a rhetorical turn of phrase or the protean collapse of "theatre" into "drama" or "TV" which further confuses the designation of "legitimacy." In the context of Theatre History, when it comes to licensed playhouses, there is no question about the reality of **legitimacy**. In England, the licensing of theatres in London by Royal Patent to perform

what historians call "the legitimate drama" was a monopoly practice **officially** broken only by the Theatre Regulation Act of 1843.

In the colony, before and after Confederation, "legitimate theatre" in New Brunswick denotes, for advertising purposes, "middle-class respectability" and "family entertainment" according to Mary Smith in *Too Soon: the Curtain Fell*.²⁷ In their generalized narrative, Benson and Conolly oppose the "legitimate theatre" with "vaudeville and burlesque houses."²⁸ Obviously, the type of theatrical performance we are referring to when we try to establish **legitimacy** is significant. In England, Michael Booth tells us that at the time of the passages of the Theatre Regulation Acts, only two theatres, Drury Lane and Covent Garden,²⁹ could offer "the legitimate drama: farce, tragedy and comedy,...[often called] the drama of the spoken word."³⁰ The financial success of the minor theatres with their "illegitimate drama": "light comedies with songs, burlesques, melodramas and sometimes poaching from the dramatic fare of their alleged oppressors"³¹ had succeeded in undermining the stability of the monopoly system. After 1843, all theatres could perform "legitimate drama," at their own financial risk. Obviously, in colonial Canada, we inherited not only the English theatrical traditions but also a way of thinking that went along with the institutionalization of those practices supported by language which gave the practice and the institution material reality.

5.4 The "Not Legitimate" Theatre in Nineteenth-century Canada: "The Variety Theatre"

I have indicated the instances of the use of the term "legitimate" in my analysis of *Theatre History in Canada* (Appendix A) in the column "Marking Differences: Vocabulary and Concepts." I have also indicated with the notation "popular" the practices which I found were placed in binary opposition to "legitimate" practices in articles about nineteenth-century theatre practices. As well, I noted these practices when they were mentioned outside the nineteenth-century context so I could mark their historical continuation in English Canada.

Addressing Mary Smith's particular historical understanding of "legitimate," it must be acknowledged that "respectability" and "attracting middle class audiences" to the theatre were business concerns which were, according to Michael Booth, as real for the London theatre managers as for those in Saint John, New Brunswick. Getting audiences into theatre seats is of critical interest to **all** theatre practice. Besides calling on his authority as a scholar to authenticate my examination of the "legitimate," I must admit that I have also inscribed a bias into Booth's narrative by assuming we are talking about the **professional** theatre rather than the **amateur** theatre in this context. I have raised this issue to make the point that **amateur theatre** and **theatre for young audiences** have, in our theatre discourse, also been kept outside the parameters of "legitimate theatre" because these practices are not considered **serious theatre** and often they employ the

popular traditions which I have listed in my analysis. These terms, "legitimate" "serious" and "popular" are interconnected. As my analysis in Appendix A indicates, the delineation of the "not legitimate" usually revolves around the ideas of light-hearted "fun" or "entertainment." In fact, when I was faced with categorizing the research topics, "circus," the "concert party," and "temperance *soirées*," I had to settle on the most regular reference, "**entertainment**."

A recent text, the Ontario Historical Study Series' collection *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914* (published in 1990) includes an essay by Gerald Lenton-Young, "The Variety Theatre," which takes as its subject matter what I have called the "not legitimate" "theatre." Lenton-Young not only documents the variety theatre in colonial Ontario in a convivial tone and conveys to the reader a riotous quest for theatrical novelty as well as familiarity, but also uses the term "legitimate" thirty-three (33) times in forty-four (44) pages of text. The reader can be assured that the Variety Theatre was **not** the **legitimate theatre**. The word "legitimate" is affixed in various combinations to "theatre" "stage" "light musical comedy" "plays" "houses" "productions" "companies" "shows" "stage reviews and musical comedies" "attractions" and "syndicates."

What are the **theatre practices** that are identified as not legitimate? Lenton Young includes in his study: "vaudeville"; "burlesque"; "puppetry"; "acrobatics"; "magic"; "minstrel show" ("olio"); "dime museums";

"panoramas"; "wandering players"; "travelling exhibits"; "menageries"; "circuses"; "concert saloons"; "experiments and ventriloquism"; "comic songs, recitations and dancing"; "elocutionists and lecturers"; "tightrope walkers, funambulists, daredevil feats"; "equestrian entertainment" "clowns" ("two equestrians, one clown and an actor" "daring rescues on horseback" "jousting" "spectacle"); "combinations" ("minstrel show plus a play"); "comic stereotypes"; "Irish caricature"; "comic monologue" ("stump speech"); "comic interaction"; "sketch"; "comic dances"; "female impersonation"; "variety shows"; "variety combination"; "specialty shows"; "musical comedies and revues"; "girlie show"; "music hall"; "concert gardens"; "concert rooms"; "pantomime"; "sparring exhibition"; "educational exhibits"; "melodrama"; "waxworks"; "freak show"; "Punch and Judy show"; "tableaux vivants"; "extravaganza"; "cooch dance"; "Salomé dance"; "jugglers"; "mindreaders"; "contortionism"; "opera"; "songs and imitations"; and "trick cycling." Many of these are also found in various narratives in *Theatre History in Canada* as well as in *A Stage in Our Past*.

Lenton-Young's article also points to two vital elements in the "not legitimate"/popular theatre tradition which alert us to theatrical differences as well as to potential difficulties that can account for the marginalization of popular practices:

- a) "the spirit of *improvisation*, that contributed most to its success"³²
- and b) the direct "relationship" the "variety performer" maintained with her *audience*.³³

In *Actors and Onlookers*³⁴, Natalie Crohn Schmitt demonstrates how improvisation undermines the authority of the author-playwright by opening the boundaries, delineated as givens in the play text, to the experience of present time on stage. The actor actually **lives through** the dramatic moment without, existentially speaking, **being** the dramatic character. The creative energy to live the moment is in the hands of the performer, rather than the author. This opens the text to endless performance (audio and visual) possibilities which are disconcerting for any writer who wishes to control the meanings generated on stage. We can therefore see that improvisation is potentially subversive. If one wants to control theatrical meaning, then one must also control improvisation.

The direct audience-performer relationship described by Lenton-Young also destabilizes the hegemonic rule of the theatre of illusion. When an actor breaks the fourth-wall, makes eye contact or physically moves into the audience's architectural space, the audience's distancing mechanisms are shattered. The actor runs the risk of breaking the onlookers' "suspension of disbelief" because the performance cannot be held at arm's length as an art object. As a member of the audience, when the performer engages directly with me, I can no longer be a passive observer nor remain

aesthetically disinterested. Because I am physically *inside* the dramatic world, I am aware of my subjective involvement in the performance, even if I choose to withhold an overt response. I enter the performance along with the actor: the dramatic moment is clearly part of my time and space. Caught in the moment as another performer, I cannot distance myself from the theatrical action taking place until my role changes again to onlooker.³⁵ Crohn Schmitt writes: "Reality is not elsewhere but here and now and it includes the means by which the work is presented and created."³⁶ Even though we can accept a clown's antics among the audience at the circus, when the same is done in **the theatre** we feel uncomfortable because the conventions of the hegemonic norm have been broken. The making of theatre is demystified; we have been let in on the secret that the stage world is simply playful pretend.

The theatre of illusion is safe theatre because it keeps the aesthetic work at a distance from real life; the actor is the agent of the playwright or the director interpreting the playwright. Any destabilization of the conventions which sustain the illusion of the staged representation³⁷ threatens the dominion of the cultural status quo. In terms of theatre practice, this status quo is sanctioned as **legitimate theatre**.

5.5 Marking the Traditions of the "Not Legitimate" in English-speaking Theatre Narratives

In Chapters 4 and 5, in order to verify the first part of my hypothesis (3.7), I have been concerned with the relationship of knowledge/power/and theatre practice in English Canada as it is materialized in our discourse. I have demonstrated how our idea of theatre is bound by an interpretive ideal that privileges the literary text. I have shown empirically how this paradigm for theatre is sustained by authenticating conventions and coded vocabularies which actually point to "legitimate" and "not legitimate" theatre games that, in turn, correspond to "literary" and "nonliterary"⁸⁸ or "popular" practices.

In the next chapters, I turn my attention to the popular traditions which are found in narratives about English-speaking theatre practice. My aim is to continue to mark the popular traditions and to construct a model for the popular theatre event from the point of view of the audience participant. As well, I am interested in isolating the aesthetic conventions of the popular theatre and comparing them with the rules of literary drama games. Through this investigation, I hope to expand my interpretive perceptions⁸⁹ and to offer a description of the three Second Wave productions, *Tears of a Dinosaur*, *Doctor Dapertutto* and *Down North*, which will bring to the foreground the popular theatre strategies used in the making of these alternate theatre games.

Because the question of a comprehensive definition for popular theatre remains elusive, we must assume that this information has not been normalized within our common knowledge, even though its relationship to theatre as "para" or "other" is generally accepted. I begin my investigation of the popular theatre by examining short narratives which attempt to define popular theatre; these include Michael Booth's pivotal essay, "What is Popular Theatre?"⁴⁰ Because I wish to continue with my strategy of framing this dissertation in the performative, I present this material as six discursive experiments which I consider **performances on paper**.

I would not suggest that **the theatre** paradigm will ever lose its central place in our conceptualization of theatre practice in English Canada. Inevitably, however, discursive rules will undergo transformation as the institution continues to redefine itself and its practices. I hope that the remaining chapters of this dissertation will demonstrate how practices of the popular tradition are playing against the hegemonic norm, that is, the literary tradition, in the Second Wave Alternate Theatre. Perhaps Second Wave practices have facilitated some of the discursive changes evident in the later issues of *Theatre History in Canada*. I found one direct reference to "the second wave" in *Theatre History in Canada* and several indirect (coded) ones.⁴¹

In the practices of the Second Wave Alternate, we, as theatre "talkers," have come face to face with theatrical traditions that we cannot

seem to explain, in "legitimate" terms. We say these practices emphasize "theatricality" "stage metaphors" "images" and that they are "popular." We may even use the word "postmodern."

ENDNOTES

¹ Murray Edwards, *A Stage in Our Past: English-language Theatre in Eastern Canada from the 1790s to 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1968).

² Gerald Lenton-Young, "Variety Theatre," *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914*, Ann Saddlemeier (Ed.) (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990), pp. 166-213.

³ Mary Elizabeth Smith, *Too Soon the Curtain Fell: A History of Theatre in Saint John, 1789-1900* (Fredericton: Brunswick Press, 1982).

⁴ Chad Evans, *Frontier Theatre: A History of Nineteenth-Century Theatrical Entertainment in the Canadian Far West and Alaska* (Victoria: Sono Nis Press, 1983).

⁵ E. Ross Stuart, *The History of Prairie Theatre: The Development of Theatre in Alberta, Manitoba and Saskatchewan, 1833-1982* (Toronto: Simon & Pierre, 1984).

⁶ "Editorial," *Theatre in Canada (THIC)*, 1(1), (Spring 1980), p. 3. Because I am concerned only with theatre in English Canada in this study, I will be referring to this journal and the association by their English titles only.

⁷ R.W. Vince, "Theatre History as an Academic Discipline," *Interpreting the Theatrical Past*, Bruce A. McConachie and Thomas Postlewait (Eds.) (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1989), p. 7.

⁸ See *THIC*, 1(1), p. 3; see footnote #6 above.

⁹ Don Rubin, "Creeping Toward a Culture: The Theatre in English Canada Since 1945," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Winter 1974), pp. 6-21 (*Italics mine*).

¹⁰ pp. 10-11.

¹¹ p. vii. At the time of Moore's writing, the St. Lawrence Centre, a Centennial project, was not complete. **Note:** Page references to *A Stage in Our Past* will henceforth be included in parentheses in the body of the dissertation.

¹² In 1968, Mavor Moore was considered an important man in the theatre institution/establishment. In the *Oxford Companion to Canadian Theatre*, Eugene Benson and L.W. Conolly (Eds.) (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1989) the list of Moore's accomplishments to that date (1967) includes theatre manager, director, writer, actor, general director of the Charlottetown Confederation Centre. He had had a successful radio career and had served the federal government and the United Nations in Information Services. He had served on the first Board of Governors of the Stratford Festival and was a Governor of the National Theatre School.

¹³ "I must confess that I had hoped to find some hint of the beginnings of our present drama when I began my research. But comparisons of this kind have for the most part proved useless" (p. 165).

¹⁴ During the course of gathering information for this dissertation, I have had the privilege of studying with Murray Edwards and have first-hand experience of the genuine eagerness with which he seeks to discover our English-Canadian theatrical past. He has displayed an enthusiasm for nineteenth-century performance traditions which, in his book, is often subsumed within the conventional rhetoric which favours "high art" seriousness and is inscribed in the text by assigning importance and value to the literary tradition while trivializing the significance of popular culture.

¹⁵ Hector Charlesworth writes vividly of this other theatre, which was the norm of his younger days. See *Candid Chronicles* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1925) and *More Candid Chronicles* (Toronto: MacMillan, 1928).

¹⁶ Edwards was writing before the arrival of the Alternate Theatre Movement, although there were several Canadian playwrights such as George Ryga and John Herbert trying to find opportunities for productions. Also, George Luscombe's company, Toronto Workshop Productions, was creating controversial performances, using improvisation as a method of writing theatrically, resulting in adaptations of foreign dramas as well as original plays.

¹⁷ This is a basic tenet of Matthew Arnold's cultural theory. Music and painting are valuable if they can be talked about in literary terms using references to "expression" or "representation." Theatre is not considered in this reference, which I take to be an indication that it is included in the category "Literary Arts" subsumed under the label "Drama." See Joseph Carroll, *The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1982), p. 188.

¹⁸ Refer to Granville-Barker, Chapter 4, footnote #10 above.

¹⁹ The phrase "nonlegitimate theatre" is used by Tracy Davis in her study, *Actresses as Working Women: Their Social Identity in Victorian Culture*.

²⁰ See David Beasley, "Major John Richardson's *The Miser Outwitted Discovered*": "colonials [were required] to deposit their published works in Britain until 1885 but [the policy] was ineffective' (p. 7)," *Theatre History in Canada*, 7(1), (Spring 1986), pp. 3-10. See also reference in Appendix A.

²¹ Howard Fink, "A National Radio Drama in English," *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions* (1985), p. 183 (Italics mine).

²² Ray Conlogue, "Directing in English Canada," *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions*, p. 312 (Italics mine).

²³ Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, p. 66 (Italics mine).

²⁴ Wallace, "Introduction," *Producing Marginality*, p. 51 (Italics mine).

²⁵ Wallace, *Producing Marginality*, p. 184.

²⁶ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 6.

²⁷ See also Mary Elizabeth Smith, "Responses to Theatre in Nineteenth-Century Saint John, New Brunswick," *Theatre History in Canada*, 2(2), (Fall 1981), pp. 133-147 and "Shakespeare in Atlantic Canada During the Nineteenth Century," *Theatre History in Canada*, 3(2), (Fall 1982), pp. 126-136. Analysis of these articles is found in Appendix A.

²⁸ *English-Canadian Theatre*, p. 22.

²⁹ In 1766, Samuel Foote was granted a special licence to perform the spoken drama at the Little Theatre in the Haymarket, but only during the summer off-season.

³⁰ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 6.

³¹ Booth, *Theatre in the Victorian Age*, p. 6.

³² Lenton-Young, p. 181 (Italics mine).

³³ Lenton-Young, p. 202 (Italics mine).

³⁴ Crohn Schmitt, pp. 118-19.

³⁵ I maintain that we are simultaneously involved as audience participants, both objectively and subjectively, in all theatrical performances. However, for the purposes of this discussion of the audience/performer relationship in "variety theatre," I have artificially separated these processes in order to articulate their dynamics and their differences.

³⁶ Crohn Schmitt, p. 117.

³⁷ Refer to Chapter 1 (1.4).

³⁸ Some readers may object to my generalization that popular practices are nonliterary. We know that historically some popular theatre games, such as melodramas, have generated literary texts. I would suggest that the common element in popular practices and nonliterary traditions is the primary orientation toward performance. Like farce, melodrama relies as much on physicality and audio-visual stage images, coded spectacle and theatrical transformation as on dialogue and agonistic debate. There is nothing to stop us from looking at melodramas as literary texts but without considering performance, which includes the social context for the event, these dramatic forms appear superficial. When these forms are incorporated into our theatre history they are not taken seriously, because they are considered inferior forms of literature.

³⁹ I subscribe to Gombrich's thesis that perception is a learned behaviour: what we perceive is a matter of the conventions we are taught; that is, a matter of decoding or reading through a matrix of rules. *Art and Illusion*.

⁴⁰ In the "What Is Popular Theatre?" issue, *Australasian Drama Studies*, (1984), pp. 3-19.

⁴¹ Robert Nunn analyzes Judith Thompson's plays in production and refers to the "seed program," which indicates a second generation of alternate plays facilitated by the first-wave companies. See "Spatial Metaphor in the Plays of Judith Thompson," *Theatre History in Canada*, 10(1), (Spring 1989), p. 5. Reid Gilbert applies the word "postmodern" to the productions created by Morris Panych and Ken MacDonald in "And then we saw you fly over here and land!: Metadramatic Design in the Stage Work of Morris Panych and Ken MacDonald," *Theatre History in Canada*, 11(2), (Fall 1990), p. 146.

CHAPTER 6

MARKING THE POPULAR THEATRE

PERFORMANCE I

Saint Meriasek is required to sail from Brittany to Cornwall and calm a storm in the course of it: granted a toy-ship, meticulously made to miniature scale and fully functional in its sails, pennants, laniards, pulleys, etc., with actors to assist choreographically as wind and waves, this scenic problem disappears and becomes instead a source of fun and pleasure to actors and spectators alike with the saint bringing comfort and renewed strength to the sea-sick and panic-stricken sailors. It is a game — elaborate, mimetic and effective.

- Glynne Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 102.

The chief characteristic of Restoration and post-Restoration drama is its non-popular character. Even when the comedy of wit gave place to the comedy of intrigue, as a rule far more popular, the theatre was still regarded as the preserve of the few rather than as the chief entertainment for everybody. It was clear that if some popular form of drama should appear it would be taken up not only by the common people but also by the world of fashion, for a good majority of the fashionable world was lacking in wit and taste, and certainly no more intelligent than the ordinary folk who were making do with puppet shows and performing animals in default of better entertainment. At the beginning of the eighteenth century, pantomime, initiated in Italy and dating back to Roman times, began to be enormously popular in England and was adopted by managers to fill their theatres and make their 'straight' plays palatable to a wider audience. After a time the pantomimes became full-length entertainments, with ambitious stage effects and transformation scenes, and writers like Fielding used this form with great skill to carry their burlesques and political satires.

- R.J. Mitchell and M.D.R. Leys, *A History of the English People*, p. 440.¹

The mimetic art of Broadway is a direct descendant of the mimetic art practised by us youngsters around the age of ten in the loft of the family barn — an art in which the Devil was always portrayed by means of a red undershirt borrowed for the occasion from the gentleman employed to curry the horses; in which the organ-grinder was depicted by means of a bandanna and an ice-cream freezer; and for a glimpse of which art lovers of the neighbourhood were taxed a variable number of pins.

- George Jean Nathan, *The Popular Theatre*, p. 146.²

6.0 The Prologue: Performance Strategies

In the next chapters, I attempt to mark the popular tradition in the English-speaking theatre. I offer the reader a series of performances in text; the performed action "to mark" is executed in six different ways, designated I through VI. Performance I is found on the previous page: the three selected quotations which open this chapter. In Performance VI (Chapter 9), I mark what I perceive to be the elements of popular tradition in three different productions from the Second Wave Alternate Theatre in English Canada.

Because I have structured these performances along the lines of a scientific experiment, I consider these chapters documented "Strategies" or "Procedures" and "Observations." I have resisted drawing final or prescriptive conclusions about the presented material and although my strategy favours the popular, I have not attempted to erase the literary tradition but rather to bring to the foreground performance traditions which are usually subsumed when contextualized by the conventional bias which valorizes literature.

I do not mean to suggest by this analogy to scientific procedure that I have attempted to offer an exclusively objective body of data. As was the case with my analysis of *Theatre History in Canada* (Chapter 5), I acknowledge that the information I have collected on the popular theatre tradition has been filtered through my particular point of view, my biases, as well as

the questions which I have raised so far in this study. Acknowledging my personal involvement with the texts I have read and those which I have subsequently constructed has empowered me to take risks with my presentation and to allow my imagination *a piece of the action*. I hope that by opening the following chapters to creative thinking the reader will be stimulated to respond in kind. My efforts have only marked the surface of the popular tradition which is part of our English-language theatrical history; they are only beginning steps to a long-term project.

I have followed different procedures for each performed marking; however, they all begin with a common methodology based on a point of poststructural theory called *intertextuality*.³ What I document here are my findings which, by the nature of the process, are incomplete; they are, however, authentic, serious and worthy of teaching. I will leave my conclusions for the final chapter of this thesis so that I am able to contextualize these conclusions around specific issues.

* * *

6.1 The Disembodied Quotation; or, Informing on Your Neighbour

By way of introduction to my approach, I have opened with three quotations which, in a manner of speaking, are **disembodied** because they have been lifted from their original context. Of course, for all narratives,

original source is difficult to pinpoint. In the first example, Glynne Wickham's lively rendition of a scene from an anonymous medieval Saint's play, *St. Meriasek*, the quotation is itself a rewording or translation of another **original text**, which is some unknown distance from its Cornish origin. Wickham used this description because it illustrated or expanded an idea he was making about medieval theatre. This idea is lost in my citation because the context which would limit the signification of the word signs and direct our interpretation to Wickham's meaning has not been included with the quotation. Instead, by offering it as a disembodied quote, I have opened the field of possible interpretation and significance which surrounds this verbal text. The reader is at liberty to respond in any way, to construct a meaning which may be miles from Wickham's intention or mine.

At the top of the page, however, I have provided a title which, I hope, will direct the reader toward my context, the popular theatre tradition. I have taken Wickham's descriptive illustration and used it to point to some ideas about popular theatre. If I had wanted to be more forceful about the ideas which I considered salient, I could underline or italicize certain words; by convention, the reader would take note of their special status. In this performance, I have left the quotation as printed to allow each word to operate independently of my direction and determination.

A floating introductory quotation, severed from its source, is a familiar literary technique but it offers certain to neither the reader nor

the writer. As a marking, a quotation is like an open-ended puzzle. The principal idea, for example, popular theatre, may be found in the title and possible clues are in the body of the quotation; but does the reader get the point? From my perspective as writer, the strategy is obviously used to stimulate thought and response; but chances are I will fail to communicate what I have found significant in this particular citation.

As a performance piece, offering quotations is analogous to playing the overture to a musical; until the reader/audience becomes familiar with the whole show, the theatrical and dramatic significance of individual melodies will surely be lost. What is established by this overture, however, is a general mapping of theatrical territory in musical time and space. As well, an overture functions as a preparation for what lies ahead by initiating dramatic ideas using tones and rhythms. Hopefully, the audience is intrigued enough to stay for the first act.

In the instance of Performance I, I have presented three quotations, rather than one, and this adds another level of complexity to the mapping of the intellectual territory called **popular theatre** and the subsequent making of meaning. Ideas stimulated by one quotation inform and interact or **interplay** with the ideas generated by the second and then again with the third. The interplay continues between the second and the third: if we read them in different order, different ideas may surface. If we read these quotations after reading the newspaper or *Maclean's Magazine*, perhaps the

words "better entertainment" "art lovers" or "the occasion" will take on new resonance. So many texts enter our experience we can never predict which will have influence or what meanings will be generated from a given text. This is the process called **intertextuality** and it is a major consideration in **poststructuralist methods of analysis**.⁴

Recently writers on popular culture have also embraced the notion of intertextuality when considering audience and reader response.⁵ When we view all cultural products as texts to be read, as I indicated with reference to Roland Barthes' theories in Chapter 1 (1.4), we expand further the range of intertextual cultural experiences which can inform meaning and significance.⁶

Whereas **context** limits the range of possible meanings by directing the reader to a contained field of interpretive reference points, deliberately utilizing **intertext** opens the text to associations and juxtapositions, the illogical and unconventional, subjective desires and emotional responses, personal experiences, educated guesses, differences and similarities and other sets of connotational relationships which can expand the field of signification. Intertextuality is another approach to **defamiliarization** (4.3) which can unlock conventional thinking.

We are not always aware of the workings of intertextual play but, for me, the territory mapped by the three quotations in Performance I takes on multidimensional contours, especially around the ideas of "game" "straight'

plays" and "mimetic art." Subtle colourations are added to George Jean Nathan's description of "art lovers" attending a Broadway/barn loft performance read intertextually with "ordinary folk who were making do with puppet shows and performing animals" and "toy-ships" "made to scale" as well as choreographed "wind and waves." "Elaborate, mimetic and effective" "entertainments, with ambitious stage effects and transformation scenes": "the Devil was always portrayed by means of a red undershirt...the organ-grinder was depicted by means of a bandanna and an ice-cream freezer." Is this composite descriptive of popular theatre?

PERFORMANCE II

6.2 What is Popular Theatre?

In this second performance, I mark the popular theatre by presenting a textual or **cognitive map**⁷ (Fig. 3), using language taken from Michael Booth's "What Is Popular Theatre?" and David Mayer's "Towards a Definition of Popular Theatre."⁸ For English-Canadian content, I will also consider "Rick Salutin and the Popular Dramatic Tradition: Towards a Dialectical Theatre in Canada" by Peter Copeman,⁹ "Towards a Popular Theatre in English Canada" by Neil Carson,¹⁰ and "Reclaiming Popular Theatre" by Rose Adams.¹¹ These texts not only **talk about** popular theatre but they also explicitly or implicitly define popular theatre by ascribing "is" to certain theatre **practices**.

A **definition** is a **closing** device; usually it functions as a synthesis, summary or conclusion to a range of ideas. It is therefore the task of this performance to keep the definition of popular theatre **open** and to resist the rhetorical closure which is conventionally coded in these published narratives. Mayer points the way when he suggests: "It is more important that in searching for popular drama [theatre] we be flexible and imaginative, open to suggestion, to perception, even impetuous, rather than risk being rigid and doctrinaire" (p. 260). As I have indicated above, I will use a performance strategy that employs **intertextuality** to resist the tendency to dismiss or devalue ideas for the sake of containment and coherence.

In order to explain how I have proceeded and to present my observations, it is necessary to impose an organizational structure on this material that will be, to a degree, hierarchical because one of the essays must act as "first" which will ground or orient the other texts. This does not mean that I have ranked these essays in terms of primary or secondary importance. Rather, an order must be selected that will facilitate presentation in terms of time and space; I must begin somewhere.

Chronologically, Mayer's article is the earliest. Booth quotes directly from Mayer; he also makes particular use of Mayer's terminology. Copeman refers to Mayer as well, but then he calls on another authority ("Shakespearean scholar Robert Weimann," p. 25) which takes his argument in a new direction.¹² Carson and Adams do not refer to any of these research

authorities; their orientation to popular theatre is related to other independent sources so that they resist comparison in terms of the historical accumulation of knowledge.

Because the intertextual interpretive process subverts synthesis, it allows me to mark these texts as if they were in an open-ended dialogue.¹³

What is the content of this dialogue? The answer:

POPULAR THEATRE IS

Since we can mark the textual **IS**, we can assume that a text constructed on the binary patterns of traditional logic will also allow us to mark:

POPULAR THEATRE IS NOT

This then is the first action in this performance: to mark each text according to the **IS / IS NOT** binary. Perhaps this action will lead us to finding a structure for this performance.

The structural pattern I have in mind is comparable to the word clusters derived from a session of brainstorming. In this case, I will be utilizing words collected from three of the selected texts referred to above. In each of these essays, the popular theatre has been marked in terms that signify a general theoretical definition (an implied or explicit "is") and these terms also point to particular practices as historical precedents or experienced performances. In theoretical terms, Michael Booth describes the popular theatre as both "paratheatre" and "illegitimate," which are terms that are already familiar to this study. He also uses the adjective "popular"

to link "theatre" to "culture" "techniques" "forms" "styles" and "entertainment." These last five words provide us with possible subheadings around which we can gather related phrases.¹⁴ The words "culture" and "entertainment" are generalizations, while "techniques" "forms" and "styles" are more specific and point to typological lists.

"Popular entertainment" in the context of "theatre" implies a social function which could be communal pleasure; the notion of "popular culture" takes functional purpose a subtle step further and broadens the contextual field for "the popular" to include activities oriented by a certain audience/participant profile. This delineation separates these two terms which are often used interchangeably in a familiar pattern of rhetorical collapse. I have linked the word "techniques" to "specialized" practices or "skills" offered by performers or "showmen"; this strategy enables us to compile names for different kinds of actor/performers. The identification between a popular event such as circus and where it is held — the circus tent, or sideshows and fairgrounds — is one of discursively extending a consideration of the performance form to include the venue (the most common example is "theatre" and "theatre building"). The site and the popular event are integral and therefore I have considered "venues" under the subheading "forms."¹⁵ Our cognitive map is therefore organized by five (5) points of reference: "popular entertainments" "popular culture" "popular techniques" "popular forms" and "popular style."¹⁶

David Mayer's essay provides us with terms to add to the typologies of techniques and forms, as does Peter Copeman's articulation of the "popular tradition." As well, Mayer's generalizations about "culture" and "entertainment" amplify Booth's ideas. It is interesting to note that Mayer acknowledges his use of the rhetorical theatre-drama collapse, which I discussed above in my analysis of English-Canadian Theatre History. When Mayer talks about *drama*, he is able to consider popular *theatre* "forms" and "techniques" in terms of "genres," a designation with which he is obviously more comfortable.

The two-person dialogue between Booth and Mayer moves toward three-way conversation with the inclusion of Copeman's perspective and adds a layer of complexity to our mapping which points to ideological irregularities around the notion of the social function of popular theatre events. In particular, a problem becomes apparent with reference to the "political" intent of popular theatre.¹⁷ Are popular theatre events political events or, because they are enjoyed by wide audiences, are they necessarily "apolitical" or "conforming" to the politics of the majority?

The essays by Neil Carson and Rose Adams do not fit neatly into my cognitive map. However, they do play intertextually with the Booth-Mayer-Copeman conversation when we foreground the idea of the social-political purpose of these events. I have considered these texts outside the performance of the cognitive map as a **postlude** because they are worthy of our

attention within the English-Canadian context of this thesis. They demonstrate the confusion we have created for ourselves when we make reference to "popular theatre" in English Canada.

To mark the different textual sources, I have used normal type to indicate Booth's language, while Mayer's additions are in **bold text** and Copeman's terminologies are *italicized*. In this performance, the marks of popular theatre which I have isolated from the Booth-Mayer-Copeman texts appear as **disembodied quotations** without page references. This textual mapping may at first seem logically incomplete and therefore unfamiliar to the reader. However, if we approach this performance as we would the open-form of a playtext by Pinter or Ionesco, the interplay among the fragmented ideas makes meaning by stimulating our thought responses. These responses will lead the reader toward the construction of a mental geography that is a cognitive territory for **popular theatre**.

Figure 3: What is Popular Theatre?

POPULAR THEATRE IS

- paratheatrical.....*quasi-theatrical entertainment*
- illegitimate

1. Popular culture.....commercial

of the people, masses.....**greater population**.....*populist*

....."lower" **income**

" **education**

" **literacy**

" **interest in aesthetic criteria**

" **level of political influence**

.....audiences: working and middle class

..... **rural and urban and middle classes**

..... *plebian,*

..... *grass-roots*

people who don't go to theatre

..... *heterogeneous*

freedom: to come and go

to talk to friends

to call out compliments, insults

to eat or drink

in dress and behaviour

..... **as participants**

.....*inclusion of audience all through the space*

political * solidarity

for education

2. Popular entertainment.....entertaining.....fun.....play.....**amusement only**

3. Popular techniques/skills.....clown

specialized

showmen

virtuosity

magician

comedian

acrobat

juggler

trapeze artist

blackface minstrel

mime

wrestler

ventriloquist

snake charmer

rope dancer

Punch & Judy man

seaside pierrot

escapologist

cyclist

musician

song and dance

improviser

music hall artiste

horseman

man vs. animal

animal trainer

wire walker

trick shooter

freaks

story-teller

Key to Type Differentiation

Booth: normal

Mayer: bold

Copeman: *italics*

* Consideration of "popular" as "political" (see pp. 203-204 below).

4. Popular forms.....circus marionettes & puppets combats
 music hall mummers variety acts
 sports carnival contests
 rock concerts mask jigs
 political rallies mime acts bull- and bear-baiting
 religious & spiritual rituals rodeo
 Gaelic ceilidh fireworks spectacles
 pantomime street theatre extravaganza
 cabaret melodrama public rites
 fairground shows commedia displays of oddities, innovations, aberrations
 musical comedy
revue and musical theatre *Boy Bishop, Lord of Misrule*

.....occasional.....event.....not recognized as theatre.....*neutral platforms*
 streets **boulevards**
 parks **sports palaces**
 clubs **exhibition halls**
 pubs **fairgrounds**
 factories **market places**
 warehouses **shearing grounds**
 community centres **threshing floors**
 village halls **forest clearings**
 conventional theatre buildings

5. Popular style:
- presentational.....*non-naturalistic*
 - appeal to emotion and senses.....effects
 **theatrical effects.....to please**
 **give them what they want**
 - physical, visual.....**mindless**
 - energetic, colourful
 - variety
 - non-elaborate, simplicity, accessible.....**inartistic**
 - directness, localism, immediacy.....identification
 *images that reveal the way the world works*
 - satire
 - structure: compartmental.....turns.....broken.....discontinuity
 compressed.....build-up and climax
 **sequence**
 - plot: simple, allegorical
 - character: impersonates a role
 **actor does not impersonate:**
 **represents without becoming**
 *profusion of characters played by [few] performers*
 *working from basic neutrality*
 -costume.....telegraphing identity
 visual signs, symbolic
 stereotypical
 -actor aware of audience and role

- direct relationship between performer and audience
 -direct address, informal
 -*objective, descriptive, analytical, metaphorical*
- non or atextual.....language not important, subordinate
 -**unliterary**
 -**poetry: rhyme.....easy to learn**
 -**pass on by word of mouth**
 -*language: earthy, terse, economical, lyrical, rhythms*
- **author unknown or more than one**
 -*collective creation*
 -**if known: known for sensational scenes or character types**
- **traditional conventions: plot, dance, dialogue, song**

.....goal: results of performance

POPULAR THEATRE IS NOT

- legitimate
- culturegood taste and refinement
 -**aesthetic culture**
- aesthetic theatre**aesthetic drama or literary drama**
- elite**select group of spectators**
- intellectual**tastes and predilections of the educated class**
- effete, reactionary
 -*patrician*

Style is not:

- [ruled by] continuity: continuity of illusion,
 -of characterization
 -of narrative
- presenting a character in the psychological sense
 -*psychological analysis: personal experience over social*
- literary: text, language, plot, character.....development
 -**meaning, structure, versification, texture, style**
 -*Aristotle's dicta.....heroic-mythological*
 -**single authorship.....reputation**
 -**identity**
 -*providing the performance dimension for a preconceived text*
- enclosed [toward the spectator].....**embodiment, representational style**
 -*realism*
 -*separation of performers and spectators*

.....goal: products.....*masterpieces*

* When Michael Booth indicates that the "popular" is often marked by the "political," he is speaking of theatre productions which are directed toward a targeted working-class audience, sympathetic to an anti-bourgeois ideology and concerned with social change as well as with who has political control over their lives. "The idea of a theatre for the people has narrowed to the concept of a socialist theatre which shows solidarity with the working class, alerts it to capitalist exploitation, and stirs it into reformist or revolutionary political action" (p. 6). Booth argues that these shows are not necessarily "popular" because their overt political content alienates general audiences which would, by definition, include the middle (bourgeois) classes.

For Mayer, the "politics" in popular theatre arises from its social purpose as an event which "beguiles, amuses, rests and relaxes the mind, encouraging conviviality and satisfaction" (p. 266). The process or results of the popular performances as a "public rite" are important "in that it serves social needs through plays that reinforce desirable social and oral conclusions...reassure the audience in the validity of traditional values and in the continuity of belief...simplifying the issues and conflicts in values in which a society must deal, presenting these issues in such a way as to make them appear harmless and of minor consequence" (p. 265).

Because popular theatre is an entertainment for the masses, theoretically those in authority can control the message conveyed by the medium at its point of origin. "Heads of government, the politically

ambitious, those concerned with the orderly progress of government, and those responsible to educate the community in religious, ethical and political values" can control the symbolic content by commissioning acceptable productions or by using the power of censorship. "These persons [in authority] both promote education in norms and values and determine the limits of this education" (pp. 261-62).

Copeman offers a third interpretation for the "political" in the popular theatre: "The principal socio-political thrust is one of parody and burlesque: the 'official' patrician view of reality is subjected to irreverent and usually comic inversion, and is replaced by a vague and fanciful vision of a utopian society of equality and material abundance" (p. 26). The political in the popular tradition is marked by reversals: turning the values of the ruling class upside down in performances that subvert by making fun. "Plebeian classes generally lack a definite [articulated] socio-political ideology, and tend instead to regard themselves in terms of negativity with respect to the patrician [hegemonic and dominant] classes" (p. 26).

6.3 The English-Canadian Postlude

The essays by Neil Carson ("Towards a Popular Theatre in English Canada") and Rose Adams ("Reclaiming Popular Theatre") differ from those included in the above mapping in that their definitions of popular theatre

are implicit rather than explicit. Carson supports the "popular" by making reference to the success of Quebec theatre and its "healthy development" as represented by the plays of Gratien Gélinas, Marcel Dubé and Michel Tremblay with special emphasis on the theories expressed by Gélinas. This approach to articulating popular theatre is legitimated by those authenticating conventions familiar to theatre historians in English Canada: the theatre-drama collapse, the primacy of the text and authorship as well as an appeal to nationalism. The "successes" of the Dumbbells, *Spring Thaw* and *My Fur Lady* are dismissed as "paradramatic." Because he foregrounds the dramatic text, Carson's implied geography for popular theatre intersects with our cognitive map at the points of (a) "not masterpieces" which rely on "literary and dramatic excellence" important to the "solemn...classics" of "elitist...high culture" and (b) the experiments using "collective creation" which had little "affect [*sic*] on the mainstream." The idea of a popular work generated by collective creation is problematic for Carson because the process is generally antithetical to the ability "to incorporate the creative contributions of the actors into an organic whole and to impose a coherent vision on the finished work" even when a "writer" is involved (p. 66). As well, collective productions are characterized by "elaborate pantomime" and "music, spectacle, and other essentially theatrical devices" which are "difficult to describe in the text" or result in a "lighter emphasis on text."

Carson's view of popular theatre productions agrees with our mapping in general terms: "populist" "broad-based" "commercial success" based on "entertainment...for the mass audience." He rejects, as Booth does, the notion that plays can be "popular" when they become a "forum for debate or propaganda." Politically speaking, popular theatre is "relevant" but not overtly "ideological"; it is about "the concerns of the ordinary man" and can "deal seriously with social issues." Stylistically, Carson marks the popular as "simple-minded, unpretentious, easily-accessible dramatic entertainment."

Because of her orientation toward the purpose of popular theatre, Rose Adams specifically contextualizes her work in the political theatre referred to by Michael Booth. This practice falls within the parameters of "maximum political effectiveness and collective growth" and is historically aligned in English Canada to the "agitprop" theatre of the 1930s, which sought solidarity among the working class ("spurring the audience on to collective action"). In style these theatre productions correspond to our territorial marking of the popular, although Adams devalues the labels "'entertaining' theatre group" and "theatrical spectacle." When Adams strategically dismisses "theatre" it seems to be a surprising rhetorical tactic until it becomes clear that her structural paradigm for "theatre" is the literary tradition which I have described in my preceding chapters as the discursive norm. Popular theatre resists "conventional theatre" by emphasizing process

and participation. Those who participate are nonprofessional "performance artists"¹⁸ rather than "actors." Those who perform are part of the "milieu to whom the play is presented," a "broader sector of the population," and the "process of preparation and rehearsal involved strategies" which undermined the "divisions of labour" found in "traditional theatre."

Popular theatre, therefore, is "political" not simply because of its content but also because as process and product it is capable of subverting the hegemonic norm. This is reinforced by Adams' assertion that there is a wider discursive geography for popular theatre than for **the theatre**. While popular productions are usually ignored by theatre critics, she has found printspace in "arts and labor publications" where "a popular theatre production [is] viewed as an information medium and form of participation for broad sectors of the population" (p. 131). Adams also points out that "the lack of funding for popular theatre," in particular "rejection [by] Canada Council," "leaves the group unable to pay for its work yet allows us to escape constraints as well" (p. 131). The lack of funding ironically forces the group to investigate other aspects of the popular theatre tradition that were marked on the Booth-Mayer-Copeman map: to "take it to the streets"; "overcome isolation from the audience"; "address pertinent and vital issues"; and "eliminate the possibilities of fancy properties and lighting."

These selected textual narratives represent five distinctly different ways of verbally constituting the material reality of events designated as

"popular theatre." If "popular style" is marked by the terms "variety" and "discontinuity," perhaps it is significant that the tradition itself is cognitively marked by an absence of "consensus" and "ordered regularity." In fact, it can be generally observed that the popular theatre seems to resist regulation and control and thus harbours the potential for transgressing the hegemonic norm. In conjunction with this possibility for political subversion through the popular, it is also important to note the seeming contradiction in popular theatre practices articulated in these essays: that **serious** intent can be conveyed through **entertainment**. Many of our learned notions about culture and artistic expression would have us believing otherwise.

ENDNOTES

¹ R.J. Mitchell and M.D.R. Leys, *A History of the English People* (London: Longmans, 1950).

² George Jean Nathan, *The Popular Theatre* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1923).

³ I have written previously about intertextuality in "Theatre History-Telling: New Historiography, Logic and the Other Canadian Tradition," pp. 46-62. However, I will be explaining with reference to Performance I how I have used intertextuality in this thesis.

⁴ In Appendix A, I found that intertextuality was a consideration in two essays of the Fall 1990 issue (11(2)) of *Theatre History in Canada*: Reid Gilbert's "And then we saw you fly over here and land!": Metadramatic Design in the Stage Work of Morris Panych and Ken MacDonald" and Natalie Rewa's "Clichés of Ethnicity Subverted: Robert Lepage's *La Trilogie des Dragons*" (pp. 148-61). Both of these writers are concerned with post-structuralism and postmodernism in their research.

⁵ In his recent publication, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention* (London: Routledge, 1992), Baz Kershaw quotes from John Fiske's study, *Understanding Popular Culture*. According to Kershaw, Fiske's particular spin on intertextuality reminds us that the "gaps, contradictions, and inadequacies" found in every text "enable different readers to arrive at variable interpretations" (p. 34). This important observation will become relevant to this performed marking of popular theatre and my historical narrative.

⁶ "Intertextuality" implies an open "uninterrupted dialogue" with other texts in game-like experiences; it is an *active* encounter. See Henry M. Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-garde since 1970* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989), p. 23.

⁷ This term comes from Roger M. Downs, *Maps in Minds: Reflections on Cognitive Mapping* (New York: Harper and Row, 1977).

⁸ In *Western Popular Theatre*, David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (Eds.) (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 257-77. Page references will be indicated in the body of the text.

⁹ Peter Copeman, "Rick Salutin and the Popular Dramatic Tradition: Towards a Dialectical Theatre in Canada," *Canadian Drama*, 10(1), (Spring 1984), pp. 25-34.

¹⁰ Neil Carson, "Towards a Popular Theatre in English Canada," *Canadian Literature*, 85, (Summer 1980), pp. 62-69.

¹¹ Rose Adams, "Reclaiming Popular Theatre," *Canadian Theatre Review* (1983), pp. 128-31.

¹² The relationship between these three essays is interesting in that the referencing system moves toward inscribing a body of common knowledge, as I have discussed in Chapter 4.

¹³ Julia Kristeva, "Word, Dialogue, and Novel," (1966) in *Desire in Language: A Semiotic Approach to Literature and Art*, Leon S. Roudiez (Ed.) and Thomas Gora, Alice Jardin and Leon S. Roudiez (Trans.) (New York: Columbia University Press, 1980), pp. 64-91.

¹⁴ Here I have made a quantum leap in my performance game planning which belongs to Mayer's realm of the "imaginative" and "impetuous": the point in the development of every performance when finding a workable form requires time-consuming and often frustrating exploration that becomes invisible in all after-the-fact descriptions.

¹⁵ This strategy is valid in this study because we have contextualized the aesthetic practice in terms of social function. This procedure assumes that the form of the theatrical event is **always** integral to its location, even in a found space, in which case the form must have flexibility so that the performance can be adapted to unusual and different circumstances. Many street theatre games are constructed with adaptability as a principal game rule.

I would argue that literary theatre events are also integrated in terms of social occasion and site. We have simply normalized the conventional compartmentalization which separates aesthetic product from social function.

¹⁶ It is critical to recognize that I am self-consciously aware that I am artificially manipulating word symbols which have no particular hold on absolute Truth in order to serve my performance goals. This is comparable to developing formulations in Mathematics: marks are always scored for showing "how you got the answer." In Math, it is always recognized that insight is a means to further learning and not an end in itself.

¹⁷ The "politics" of popular theatre is further problematized when read intertextually with Tom Burvill's essay, "The Politics of the Popular in Contemporary Australian Theatre," *Australasian Drama Studies*, (1984), pp. 19-32.

¹⁸ A discussion within the context of performance art of the Popular Theatre Projects' production of *Eight Men Speak*, the subject of Adams' essay, is found in Alain-Martin Richard and Clive Robertson, *Performance au/in Canada, 1970-1990* (Toronto: Coach House Press, 1991), pp. 230-31.

CHAPTER 7

MARKING THE POPULAR THEATRE:
CONTEXTUALIZED BY HISTORY

PERFORMANCE III

7.0 A Chronology of the Popular Tradition in the English-speaking Theatre According to Selected Authors

In Chapter 6, by exploiting the concept of **intertextuality** to the point where I used it as a **game rule** (Performance I) and as a **game strategy** (Performance II), I was able to mark how we talk about the popular theatre without yielding to the epistemological determination of a **closed** definition. Subscribing to a prescribed **definition** would only limit the range of possible ideas associated with popular practice. I have also emphasized the possibility of textual **openness** in juxtaposed quotations (Performance I) and in textual mapping (Performance II) so as to invite the reader to participate in the process of making meaning around the idea of the popular theatre and its practice. I acknowledge that, as author of these performances, to organize the information I found it necessary to employ structural constraints which were dictated by the writing medium. The most obvious was a linear beginning, middle and end which ordered the data within a conventional pattern of teleological (end-directed) thinking and imposed an experience of **containment** on the information.¹

My intent in using this poststructuralist methodology has been to subvert the desire for **closure** and **completion** which has the effect of

foreclosing exploratory processes. Instead, I hope to **open** published texts to **new thought**. In terms of product, my purpose is to offer in Performance III what Umberto Eco has described as **the open work**.² This performed "work" is to be a body of compiled information, that is, quoted or paraphrased selections about popular practices in the English-speaking theatre. This information can then be used as a database for reference (used for the narrative response below, "Part Two") and as source material for further performances (IV and V). In this performance, I consider myself in role as explorer-discoverer rather than as author.

* * *

PART ONE: RULES AND STRATEGIES

7.1 The Rules of the Game: Choosing Texts

The openness of this performance is best demonstrated by my selection of texts. Theoretically any book can be read for the purpose of notating the historical marks which bear a relationship to the popular theatre tradition. There are, however, obvious limitations which make some texts more fitting for this performance than others and the historical, theatrical, social and linguistic contexts of this doctoral research have narrowed the range of texts considerably. Accessibility of texts is another determining factor. For example, Samuel McKechnie's general history of popular entertainments, *Popular Entertainments through the Ages*,³ and R.J. Mitchell's and M.D.R. Leys' social history, *A History of the English People* were the two books readily available in the University of Victoria library on these broad topics.

Chance also determined the references I used for pantomime. R.J. Broadbent's *A History of Pantomime*⁴ written in 1901, was augmented by other studies conducted by Winifred Smith ("The Commedia dell'Arte in Elizabethan and Jacobean England" in *The Commedia dell'Arte*,⁵ 1912), Cyril Beaumont ("Harlequin in England" and "Some English Harlequins" in *The History of Harlequin*,⁶ 1926), David Mayer III (*Harlequin in His Element: The English Pantomime, 1806-1836*,⁷ 1969) and Virginia Scott

("The Infancy of English Pantomime: 1716-1723",⁸ 1972), as well as the 1973 historical survey presented in *Pantomime: A Story in Pictures* by Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson.⁹ As was the case with the histories written by McKechnie and by Mitchell and Leys, these were the texts on the shelf when I was at the library. David Wiles's *Shakespeare's Clown*¹⁰ and Marion Lomax's *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford*¹¹ were from my personal library.

Authoritative narratives referred to frequently in English-speaking Theatre History, such as the early work (1801) *Sports and Pastimes* by Joseph Strutt,¹² as well as those by E.K. Chambers (1903)¹³ and Glynne Wickham (1963,¹⁴ 1966,¹⁵ 1972,¹⁶ 1988¹⁷) were easily accessed. I found, however, late in the process that a fourth and final volume (published in 1981) of Wickham's extensive study, *Early English Stages*, had not been acquired by the university even though the third book alluded to material on stagecraft which was to be forthcoming. In this instance, I thought it would not undermine my performance if I chose not to acquire this text through interlibrary loan services. Rather, it would serve my intent to resist closure if I strategically left this text unmarked and instead asked the reader to consider why the university had not invested in the final volume of an influential study about stage practice. Perhaps this compensatory gesture, I reasoned, would facilitate contemplation on the basic argument of my thesis, that is, that talking about theatre practice in the context of

performance is an undervalued cultural endeavour, even within the academic institution.

I targeted certain texts because of their subject matter: O.B. Hardison's consideration of the Catholic Mass as drama in *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages*;¹⁸ George Speaight's *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*;¹⁹ Martin Meisel's study *Realizations: Narrative, Pictorial, and Theatrical Arts in Nineteenth-Century England*, which complements Michael Booth's research in "Spectacle as Production Style on the Victorian Stage"²⁰ and *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910*;²¹ Joseph Donohue's important article, "Burletta and the Early Nineteenth-Century English Theatre,"²² and an essay by Sybil Rosenfeld on the fair-ground impresario, "Master Richardson - 'The Great Showman'."²³ Other texts provided important historical information on censorship and the legitimization of theatre practices: Richard Findlater's *Banned!*;²⁴ L.W. Conolly's *Censorship: 1737-1824*;²⁵ and John Russell Stephens' *Censorship: 1824-1901*.²⁶

Finally, titles made themselves known to me because of cross-referencing (e.g., Michael Hattaway's *Elizabethan Popular Theatre*²⁷ was referred to by Lomax). Other experiences brought useful texts to my attention. In particular, I happened to be studying a feminist version of the Tarot and inadvertently was drawn to the text by Robert Graves on pagan worship, *The White Goddess*.²⁸ This led me to reading Barbara Walker's

*The Secrets of the Tarot: Origins, History and Symbolism*²⁹ and *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*³⁰ which offered strategic interplay with Hardison's interpretation of the Catholic Mass as coded ritual.

These feminist texts also influenced my performance strategies. For instance, from my reading, I learned that the roots of the practice of cross-dressing are very long and deep, and go back to the days of the patriarchal appropriation of pagan rites to the Goddess.³¹ It was believed only women could channel the sacred energy of the Goddess so that men dressed up and performed as if they were women to access the sacred spirit. Up to this time, I had no thoughts of intentionally bringing a feminist component to this research other than my personal bias which encompasses my way of looking at the world because I am a woman. However, with the inclusion of material on symbolic coding according to a feminist system, this strategy of gender neutrality changed significantly. The openness of the game rules allowed me to explore territory that I would have otherwise overlooked or discarded in an effort to fulfil the desire for closure.

Concerns I have about the study of theatrical practice in cultural isolation from other social-political practices³² led me to include a text on social history (Mitchell and Leys), as well as a popular version of the development of the English language, *The Story of English*³³ by Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, which was published in its

revised edition around the time I began collecting source material for this chronological database. Many of the narratives I have used in this performance, such as Michael Booth's contribution to *The Revels History of Drama in English, Volume VI: 1750-1880*, "The Social and Literary Context,"³⁴ also offered valuable contextual information. I made no effort to untangle the web of dominant ideologies which enmesh these chosen texts, other than to read them through the same interpretive frames which I have outlined in my previous chapters³⁵ and to select the data entries according to their relationship to what I know as "popular theatre."³⁶

In Performance III, found as Appendix B, I ordered the entries according to a time line because the context for this research is History³⁷ and dates are a familiar way of orienting past occurrence. My editorial commentary has been included in square brackets and represents my own intertextual response and cross-referencing.

7.2 Marking the Popular Using a Computer

In this performance I did not predetermine how many books I would consider and I plan on adding to this database in the future as more texts come to my attention. The reader is welcome, too, to continue the game and to add to this "chronology." Computer technology facilitates the insertion of new information at any point and the beginning-middle-end structure can expand accordingly. By employing the computer's search function ("Find" in

Macintosh parlance, "Search" in IBM), the reader can call up a date of interest such as 1576 (the building of The Theatre by the Burbages in London) or 1832 (the convening of the House of Commons' Select Committee to examine the licensing of theatres) and 1843 (the passing of the Theatres Act, also known as the Theatre Regulation Bill or "Bulwer's Act").

Several entries falling under the same date have been clustered according to topic or related theme. This manipulation allowed me to include material which was not always assigned a date in the source text but which was of interest to this study. For example, concerning the development of the "interlude," the first recorded entry falls under 1180 in a reference by Joseph Strutt to religious miracle plays. Further references are found under 1210, 1372 and 1385 because authors have often used this term, as Strutt did, to describe short plays devised in the later middle ages. I did not enter the descriptive information supplied in Wickham's text, *The Medieval Theatre*, for the interlude form until 1389 because this was the first (marked) instance when the word "interludium" was used in the title of a play.

In this performance, I found that I could not be overly concerned with verifying historical accuracy; rather, I had to think of this database as a work-in-progress which is open to modification as more information is collected. To help orient events chronologically, when I was in doubt, I used two general reference texts, *The Timetables of History* and *The Cambridge*

Guide to World Theatre.³⁸ I noted any discrepancies that I found in the citation of dates; some, such as the first eighteenth-century pantomime performance by John Weaver or the first Corpus Christi cycle in the vernacular in the fourteenth century have become the subject of historical debate and I attempted to reflect this disagreement in the marking. Other situations which required discretionary historical licence included citations by authors from primary material recorded by early chroniclers. For example, Stowe (who died in 1605), the author of *A Survey of London* which was published in 1720 became a primary source for Strutt's secondary commentary (published in 1801). Strutt makes frequent reference to Stowe's documentation of popular customs or "folk" traditions but does not always provide chronological contextualization. I can only assume that empirical preciseness was not a research imperative in the late eighteenth century when Strutt was writing.

Some entries, such as the coding of the Catholic Lenten Agon in 813 A.D. as a five-act theatrical allegory, are documented in long and complex detail which reflects the documentation of the event in the source text. In some cases, such as Speaight's outlines of Punch and Judy shows or Hattaway's discussions of productions of Elizabethan plays, I attempted to telescope long descriptions by using my own words. However, when I found my intervention interfering with how the author had presented his or her material, I left the author's words intact in sentences or associated phrases.

Other entries are recorded as simple notations of performance events. Events which are similar, such as the occurrence of Cycle plays in Chester or Beverley described by Wickham and Chambers or the early pantomimes described by Broadbent and Scott, can be traced according to names of authors, titles or place of event. Another method for tracing the ideas we associate with popular theatre is by following "keywords."³⁹

7.3 Marking Keywords

I have compiled a list of **keywords** which I gathered throughout this performance. Many of these terms such as "pantomime," "parade," "clowns," "illegitimate," "improvisation," and "music hall" are already familiar because they were found in the textual mapping in Performance II. We have already associated them with popular theatre and in this performance, I used them as signposts to guide my selection of data. Other words are new to this study; I found that they were significantly related to the conventions which give form to popular practices in English-speaking theatre. By using the computer's search function, these words can be traced through the chronology. When we trace these terms through the accumulated data, we are left with a collection of discontinuous historical narratives that are interrelated because they focus on a theme, contextual social or political issue, theatrical practice or a popular form. Of course the reader is invited to add to this list according to personal interests.

Figure 4: Keywords⁴⁰

- ritual: Mass ♦ *officium* ♦ pagan ♦ saint ♦ god ♦ fertilization
 female ♦ women ♦ witch ♦ Mary ♦ Marion ♦ mother
 goddess ♦ virgin
 cross-dressing ♦ dressed in women's clothes ♦ *en travestie*
 man-woman
- folk customs: maypole ♦ mummers ♦ hocktide ♦ kern baby/corn dolly
 mumming ♦ hobby-horse ♦ morris ♦ masker
 Fool ♦ merry-andrew ♦ Jack ♦ yokel ♦ bells ♦ motley
 Vice ♦ Iniquity ♦ devil ♦ demon ♦ grotesque
 Lord of Misrule ♦ boy bishop
 clown ♦ bat ♦ dagger ♦ wooden sword ♦ stick
 Harlequin ♦ magic wand ♦ Punch ♦ Judy
 Robin ♦ wildmen ♦ green men ♦ savage ♦ wodehouse
- theatricality: personate ♦ mask ♦ guise ♦ attitude/posture-maker
 mime ♦ mimicry ♦ mimetic ♦ mimesis ♦ as if ♦ like/"lyke"
 pretend/pretence ♦ disguise/"degyse" ♦ *quasi* ♦ make believe
 dressing up ♦ illusion ♦ resemble ♦ symbolic ♦ "counterfaite"
 realization ♦ illustration ♦ represent ♦ picture ♦ "is"

- theatricality: game ♦ *ludil/ludus* ♦ play/"*pleg*" ♦ *representatio*
 (continued)
- allegory/allegorical ♦ interlude ♦ parody ♦ farce/farcical
 gleeman ♦ juggler ♦ troubadour ♦ itinerant player ♦ *trouvère*
jongleur ♦ *histrio* ♦ *jestour/jester* ♦ *lusore* ♦ trickster
 tour ♦ circuit ♦ profession ♦ amateur
 (the) "ordinary" ♦ author ♦ artificer
 audience ♦ spectator
 scaffold ♦ theatre ♦ wagon/waggon ♦ stage ♦ tiring house
 "*sedes*" ♦ "*platea*" ♦ "*loca*" ♦ "*domus*" ♦ mansion
 entertain ♦ wonder ♦ enchantment
- effect(s): emblem ♦ code ♦ expositor ♦ epic ♦ episode ♦ sequence
 scenario ♦ scenography ♦ theme ♦ narrative ♦ colour
 turn ♦ jig ♦ knockabout ♦ improvisation ♦ extemporal
 "interpolating"
tableau ♦ dumb show ♦ discovery ♦ moving picture
 "ballet of action"
 word ♦ verse ♦ rhyme ♦ rhythm ♦ alliteration

- symbols:** blood ♦ water ♦ bread/host ♦ tree ♦ well ♦ cup ♦ chalice ♦ sepulchre
tower ♦ angel ♦ light ♦ candle ♦ rose
seven ♦ three ♦ four
dragon ♦ horse ♦ ass ♦ peacock ♦ owl ♦ dove
red/scarlet/carnation ♦ white ♦ black ♦ green ♦ blue ♦ yellow ♦ violet
- forms:** pantomime ♦ procession ♦ parade ♦ pageant ♦ fireworks
fair ♦ tavern ♦ circus ♦ music hall ♦ carnival
panorama ♦ spectacle ♦ extravaganza ♦ Lord Mayor (Show)
puppet ♦ action ♦ motion ♦ automaton ♦ figure
"on strings" ♦ "on cords"
image ♦ giant ♦ rope-dancing ♦ balance ♦ tumble
- socio-political context:** (il)legitimate ♦ legal ♦ social order ♦ discipline ♦ conform
regulate ♦ standard ♦ respectability ♦ coarse
uncultivated ♦ taste ♦ vulgarity ♦ culture ♦ art
bourgeois ♦ middle class ♦ businessman ♦ entrepreneur
guild ♦ parish ♦ clergy ♦ hierarchy ♦ orthodox ♦ puritan
working class ♦ "prentice" ♦ tradesman ♦ factory ♦ mob
folk ♦ mass ♦ servants ♦ work ♦ people ♦ crowd
book ♦ vernacular ♦ literate/literacy ♦ school ♦ moral
educate/education ♦ edification ♦ improvement
child ♦ youth

7.4 Marking Time in Spatial Zones: The Community at Play

Rather than consider historical periodization as segments of a single continuous time line, I have treated the spread of theatre history spatially, in terms of a tension between recurrence and change, mapped over four time zones. I have labelled these zones as dialectical relationships and have indicated which texts (by author) were specifically used to mark the popular for each zone as follows:

- a) *Pagan ritual / Christian rite* (Chambers, Graves, Walker, Hardison, Wickham);
- b) *Bill Shakespeare / Ben Jonson* (Hattaway, Lomax, Wiles, Wickham);
- c) *Legitimate theatre / Illegitimate theatre* (Booth, Conolly, Findlater);
- d) *High art / Popular culture* (Findlater, Stephens, Booth, Meisel).

The approximate break between a) and b) is 1400 when scholars were invited to England from Italy;⁴¹ between b) and c) is 1660 when the English monarchy was restored;⁴² and between c) and d) is 1850. As with all these breaks, this 1850 is semiotic rather than real and relative rather than absolute. In terms of a representative event which signals this break, I would point to T.W. Robertson's deliberate attempts to devise two types of plays for two types of theatres.⁴³

I began this study with the conventional premise that theatre and drama, as we know them, have their roots in communally-shared ritual

practices. My paradigm for ritual is **the community at play**, a theoretical composite borrowed from the research of the late anthropologist, Victor Turner.⁴⁴ Turner's findings acknowledge the seriousness as well as the pleasure or **jouissance**⁴⁵ derived by participating in play structures, as individuals within social units. Through my own research in play behaviour, I have found that **play and theatre** share many characteristics.⁴⁶ As a mode of consciousness, both play and theatre are structured behaviours which constitute an existential transformation; that is, they arise from the ability of the mind, body and spirit to create a special category of **lived experience** that produces a **contingent** reality. This reality is referred to as **liminal**⁴⁷ because it is experienced as being outside the everyday while one is still living within actual time and space; it is living **in between** the real world and a made-up possible (not necessarily probable) play world. My conscious awareness of myself in the play mode is as **me** and **not me** at the same time. This is the mode of pretence we know to be the relationship between the **actor** and her **character** when she is **in role**; it is the protean mode of **theatrical transformation**. The linguistic manifestation of liminal play is the verbal **subjunctive** case which describes the **as if** or **quasi** fictive world of projected possibilities. Playing is living in a self-made contingency, a time and space where we are concerned with the creative process of **becoming** rather than with the products of **being**. Although many have argued that play is gratuitous and for its own sake,⁴⁸ I would contend

that the seriousness of play arises from a personal and social need for creative exploration; its ends may be subjective but its rewards are abundant in terms of facilitating learning and change as well as cultural productivity.

The liminal structures which admit community play or ritual are social time-space matrices that are set apart from the ordinary and every day for the specific purpose of aesthetic expression.⁴⁹ Authorities on ritual maintain that these practices are constituted by the strategic and purposeful manipulation of cultural symbols. These symbols, although they may be ambiguous in terms of their direct relationship to the play world, channel emotional energy because they are filled with multiple meanings from the real world — associations which are both shared and private.⁵⁰ This view corresponds to my understanding of theatre practice as a communication system outlined in Section 1.4 and allows me to agree with those conventional historians who contend that the origin of theatre is **performed ritual**. At the same time, I do not have to submit to those authorities who insist on tracing these ritual origins to the Catholic liturgy or to Greek and Roman drama, which are both literary forms. I can keep the focus of this chronological marking on performance.

My premise that theatre events are analogous to games has been supported as well by the texts of my chronology. According to Hardison and Chambers, the first recorded word sign used by the encoders of Catholic

ceremonial practices was *officium*; the official rules or guidelines, known as **rubrics**, gave structure and form to liturgical rites. When it was accepted that during the ritual the priest behaved as if he were Christ or three deacons **pretended** to be the Maries, the *officium* was then referred to as *representatio*. Once these performed rites incorporated more symbols (verbal and iconic) that were connected as much with the everyday world as with the spiritual world, the word used to describe these performance activities was *ludi* or games.⁵¹ Both Wickham and Chambers associate *ludi* with folk revels such as mayings and mummings and from these Wickham connects game playing and the Anglo-Saxon *plega* or **play**.⁵² Wickham wrote in the context of Elizabethan and Jacobean stage practices: "Chief among these [artistic conventions that were inherited from the mediaeval past] was the frank acknowledgement that a stage-play was a form of game."⁵³

The correspondence between these etymological exercises and recent developments in performance theory and practice based on game and play⁵⁴ as well as ritual is not serendipity. To conceptualize **the community at play**⁵⁵ with performers and spectators participating in structured symbolic and liminal activities, organized by a set of rules or rubrics, is also to think of audience and actors participating in **rituals, games or plays** devised by and for themselves as a community. I have found nothing in my chronological research to suggest otherwise.

PART TWO: OBSERVATIONS, A SOCIO-POLITICAL RESPONSE

7.5 Time Zone One: Pagan Ritual / Christian Rite

In the first time zone, I was strategically looking to plot the Christian recodification of pagan ritual and symbolism,⁵⁶ which historians commonly associate with ancient customs of worship and describe as antecedent to traditional "folk" performances such as "St. George and the Dragon" and "Robin Hood and Maid Marion." These aesthetic practices were not only pleasurable but also spiritually meaningful to the people; they conveyed their beliefs in ritualized performance modes. Many of the symbols such as the stag, the lamb, the well, the blood, the loaf of bread and the sepulchre/cave served as familiar conventions and were combined bisociatively with coded doctrine in the official *rubrics* of Christian rites, such as the Mass and *Quem quaeritis*. Theatrical common knowledge tells us these rites marked the beginning of drama and theatre in England. Although we often talk about customs as universally "English" or "Celtic" what becomes apparent in this chronological marking, and must be noted at the outset, is that many of these practices, both Christian and pagan, are also marked by local and particular aesthetic choices.⁵⁷

E.K. Chambers suggested that, during the time of the conversion from pagan worship, "heathenism was glossed over rather than made extinct."⁵⁸ Although folk customs are repeatedly portrayed as secular festivities for fun and sex, those Chambers described must have been deeply-felt symbolic practices⁵⁹ because these performed rituals were the enactment of sacred connections between people and their universe. Falling in line with J.G. Frazer's anthropologically-oriented scholarship, Chambers' research also attempted to decode and construct meanings for these practices. He confidently records, relying on accepted Darwinian interpretations, the evolution of religion from simple practices ("childishly curious [attempts]...to control nature") through the development of spiritual "animism" to a more complex "notion of god...[after] the analogy of the human chief...[who is] the embodiment of the sunlit heavens." This father-like "god" was the creative force of rain and fertilization whose "counterpart [was] the earth mother" worshipped in sex cults.⁶⁰

Chambers' interpretation carries an element of social risk as well as academic speculation because knowledge of pagan beliefs has always been forbidden according to the laws handed down by the Judeo-Christian God.⁶¹ More specifically, the sacred knowledge or religion that has been taboo in Christianized societies is a spiritual belief in which the

universe is equated with the divine Great Mother goddess, and aesthetic practices are coded in terms of female sexuality. The Goddess is symbolically made manifest on earth with her partner, the consort-brother Horned God who sacrifices himself each year for the purpose of renewal and regeneration. Patriarchal powers, even before the socio-political sweep of Christianity, sought systematically to undermine and suppress woman-centred religious practices by elevating the role of the consort-brother god to supreme ruler.⁶² Robert Graves made the assertion that final separation from the old beliefs came with the Commonwealth when ascendancy to the highest positions of power gave Puritans access to cultural encoding systems. Graves described this time as the "purely patriarchal stage of cultural development."⁶³ Those who ruled insisted that God the Father be placed in the position of highest authority, replacing the authority of the Virgin Mary who had, with the conversion to Christianity, been ascribed the symbolic attributes of the Goddess. Although the Puritans lost political control when the king was restored to the throne, I observed that the patriarchal codes were further reinforced by the Calvinist principles of the rising merchant class and reached a high point of influence in the early nineteenth century marked by the formation of such organizations as the Society for the Suppression of Vice.⁶⁴

Disguise played an important role in the conversion of pagans to Christianity. Barbara Walker writes: "When men began to take over the spiritual authority formerly vested in women, they frequently put on women's clothing, and/or made themselves pseudo-women by other means."⁶⁵ Walker pointed out that the third canon of the Council of Nantes ruled that women had no souls, which implied that they were spiritually insignificant, if not damned. Women could not practise as religious leaders and they were not to be trusted. In one of his footnotes, Chambers inadvertently adds to this historical narrative by stating that Christianity did not deny the existence of heathen gods; rather, these gods were recoded as demons and devils.⁶⁶ These devils were not only coded with the iconography of masculine paganism (i.e., wearing masks of the Horned God), but more often they embodied feminine traits (e.g., they were portrayed with breasts and wore red, the colour of the sacred blood of the womb). We also find in the Mummers' plays that devils became interchangeable with witches and old women and that the feminine Earth Serpent was transformed into the deadly dragon of the St. George's play.⁶⁷

It is interesting to note that the Domesday Book (1086) shows instances of women ruling mixed religious communities as if the challenge to their position were a gradual undermining rather than an all-out attack or religious cleansing. Likely those in charge

recognized people's resistance when asked to abandon their spiritual beliefs. The campaign strategy of recoding familiar symbolic practices in persuasive and reassuring ways was obviously a long-term plan which proved effective. The persecution of women and the erasure of their spiritual traditions reached a crescendo in 1603 when James I put his seal to the *Statute of Witchcraft*, which sentenced all suspected witches to death; this statute was not repealed until 1763 when the patriarchy felt confident of its place of power.⁶⁶

The strategic use of traditional symbolic practices for the purposes of spreading Christian doctrine included appropriating the mediating channels as well as the media. It is recorded that, in 597, a priest named Eadhelm would dress himself as a gleeman and perform for the people on their way home from Mass; he would mix his "serious" Christian message with "*carmina trivialia*."⁶⁹ "Gleeman" is the Anglo-Saxon variant for the names given to the itinerant performers commonly known as minstrels. These minstrels were segregated into two distinct social classes: the troubadours (*story-tellers*), who had access to wealth and status because they were usually educated (literate) or from nobility, and the lower class jugglers, mimes or jesters (*actors*) who depended upon their performance skills and versatility for survival. Specializing in provocative gesture and mimicry, the jugglers used their technical skills and physical virtuosity as well as their voice, to entertain.⁷⁰

The Norman *trouvères* or troubadour-minstrels encoded into literature the rich legacy of Romance and Chivalry that has been tapped by writers for centuries and, even today, is valued by critics.⁷¹ Significantly, Robert Graves' research demonstrated how the chivalric codes which paid homage to the feminine reinforced the ancient Celtic and Teutonic goddess traditions and practices which had been forced underground by Christianity.

The minstrels of the mime tradition, on the other hand, have consistently been maligned as vagabonds and protean tricksters. McKechnie described how they were deemed by the Christian authorities to be associates of the devil. Many practised conjuring and magic and were aligned with sorcerers as well as witches.⁷² If we subscribe to a notion of ritual that ties community worship to festive revels and entertainments (the community at play), we can see that this association was not accidental but strategic and political.⁷³

My chronological research reinforces the view that theatrical performance should be studied as a communication system as well as an aesthetic practice. Eadhelm's disguise as a gleeman was not an unusual occurrence. Throughout medieval times, priests were often taken for minstrels and vice versa; both shaved the crowns of their heads⁷⁴ and when in *quasi* dress one could gain access to places which usually excluded the other. In 960, the

Saxon king, Edgar, passed a conflict-of-interest law, forbidding any priest from "[being] a poet, [or exercising] mimical or histrionic art, public or private."⁷⁵

The Church, however, found that allegorical enactment and imitation worked as a means of coding the Christian message in ways which the people could understand and enjoy. Many special holiday services used scenes of enactment which told the Resurrection as well as the birth of Christ and focused on familiar symbols such as the lamb, a star, bread and blood. Three hundred years after Edgar's law, the Mendicant Friars were employing the same oral story-telling techniques of the gleemen, in their "cautionary tales," which allegorically linked everyday events, often couched in racy anecdotes and meaningful performed gesture, to proper Christian behaviour.⁷⁶ As well, priests encouraged their parishioners to participate in public acts of devotion; these included arduous pilgrimages to holy places in processions which symbolically imitated the sufferings of Christ.⁷⁷

The formal and widespread institutionalization of play acting associated with religious enactment came about in 1318 with the universal observation of the Feast of Corpus Christi as a calendar holiday and community celebration.⁷⁸ The Church recognized the value in using theatrical performance as a form of mass media for spreading their doctrine. Preplanned rituals in the form of *plays* were considered viable means of worship incorporating praise, thanksgiving, and intercession within the theatrical event. At the same time, the Church realized that plays could be used to inform and educate, and that the pleasurable experience of playmaking also encouraged greater devotion to the tenets of Christianity.⁷⁹ Lastly, the Church found that putting on plays proved a lucrative method of fundraising.

* * *

7.6 Time Zone Two: Bill Shakespeare / Ben Jonson

When I began organizing material for Performance III, it was my intention to focus on the differences in dramatic enactments in England as a result of the influence of the Italian Renaissance. My orientation for this time zone was based on two assumptions:

- 1) that Jonson's playscripts, written to be published as works of "drama" by a "poet,"⁸⁰ reflect an interest in the scholarly rediscovery of the literary poetics of Aristotle and Horace. Jonson's exploration in literary dramatic forms found favour with the Stuart courtiers and therefore was subsidized with Inigo Jones's scenic and architectural experiments.

- 2) that Shakespeare's plays, over half of which were not published until after his death,⁸¹ were successful with audiences of all classes as theatrical events and found favour as literature at a much later date. Even in text form, these plays retain many of the popular conventions of medieval and Elizabethan performance. Shakespeare played out his games within a negotiated space that afforded the bisociation of popular conventions with neoclassical aesthetics.

For the purposes of organization, I have deferred the comparison of popular and literary theatrical conventions to a separate Performance V. In this narrative, I have strategically followed another cultural index: the building of permanent playhouses within the context of the changing social and political, as well as aesthetic, interests which are traced *before* the construction of The Theatre by the Burbages up to "the closure of the theatres" in 1649.⁸²

In contemplating the Bill/Ben time zone, a significant historical threshold came into view, which I now identify as **the institutionalization of the theatre in 1576**. When the Burbages built The Theatre on the outskirts of London for the exclusive use of the Earl of Leicester's Men (later the Lord Chamberlain's Men), who held the only royal patent for the performance of stage plays,⁸³ a commercial venture founded on the enactment of plays was established as the prototype for **the theatre** which we now consider the norm. This prototype has been coded as an interpretive paradigm in our historical discourse for over four hundred years and we recognize it in the three-part ideogram "plays, players and play-house" which ordered Murray Edwards' book about the English-Canadian theatre before World War I.

This **theatre** and its practices were organized around a new cultural order which replaced the old medieval system. Under the old system, the Catholic Church controlled the content of playscripts as well as the occasion for plays, while the guilds controlled production elements. In terms of labour, the amateur corps (actors and crew) mirrored the feudal system in their duty and service to a higher authority, the Church.⁸⁴ A change in the means of play production did not occur overnight nor did it yield by its own accord. Rather, the chronology documents repeated attempts by various interest groups to control the stage. It also records many incidents when the enactment of plays which ridiculed Catholics and supported the Protestant cause or vice versa, invariably led to some form of public disorder: riots,⁸⁵ public executions⁸⁶ and threats of insurrection.

It was the time of political and social upheaval that we call the Reformation and the primary object on the agenda of the State was the implementation of a secular rather than a religious focus within the dominant social value system, to keep the power and the

country's resources in the hands of the sovereign ruler and his agents rather than with religious leaders answerable to the Pope. This transference of power within the English social system required the political imposition of a uniform standard of behaviour (and thought) on the populace.⁸⁷ To quell the chaos caused by religious hostilities, the State legislated into existence a new social order, a hierarchy in which the secular head had ultimate authority even over the Church.

Inevitably, in order to facilitate political change, the ruling administration found it necessary to regulate and control communication systems. Authorized media delivered the appropriate messages which informed and educated the people as to what was now proper social thought and conduct. The channels of mediation which were available within the Bill/Ben time zone included the pulpit and platform (which includes the theatre) and the nascent printing industry. With the various acts of Parliament beginning in 1529 that led to the establishment of the Church of England and with the closure of the monasteries in 1532, the pulpit was fettered and subdued. Censorship of books was achieved in 1556 by awarding exclusive printing monopoly to the Stationers' Company, although the chronology shows that pamphleting was a strategy regularly employed by Puritans "loyal to the crown"⁸⁸ and the north door of St. Paul's became a centre for the distribution of broadsides.⁸⁹ Controlling theatrical performance was another matter.

The control of theatre practice, in particular the staging of interludes, was subject to more factors than just the control of Catholic and Protestant ideological content. The *Act of Uniformity*, which was to put a stop to polemical plays, was undermined during the reigns of Mary (Catholic interests) and Edward (Protestant interests) to such an extent that, when Elizabeth succeeded to the throne in 1558, an interim prohibition on play-making was instituted and the first proclamations requiring the licensing of plays followed. The Privy Council assumed responsibility for theatrical enactments with particular focus on dramatic plays or interludes. "In their censorship they had the assistance of the bishop of London, as 'ordinary.'⁹⁰ Municipal officers acted as the Queen's agents to prohibit plays which were considered contentious.⁹¹

When the Earl of Leicester's players were granted their royal patent to play in London, it was stipulated that their plays had to be approved by the Master of the Revels⁹² and so began the practice of theatrical censorship through the licensing of play-scripts which was to be in effect until 1968.⁹³ The significance of this regulation cannot be underestimated. From this point onward, "legal" theatre practice within the institution-establishment would have to begin with a literary/written form that could be read; words

became the most important component in state-approved theatrical performances. In fact, writing theatrically using improvisation was henceforth considered illegal.⁶⁴

Obviously controlling the actor's performance is a matter to consider separately from play regulation because, in the final analysis, the actor remains in control of onstage presentation. The amateur corps which participated in the Cycles and other religious plays was only one segment of the playmaking population. Itinerant actors who performed at fairs, taverns, and inns were often targeted as sources of social disturbance and classed as vagabonds in proclamations against them. Often they found themselves accused of spreading sedition in times of political unrest. Those who wore the livery of the house of a nobleman or of a wealthy merchant or were "waits"⁶⁵ (performers hired by municipal corporations) were protected by law. It is documented that Henry VII maintained his own company of four players led by Mr. John English.⁶⁶

Early in the fifteenth century, tension mounted between the municipal authorities and the State over the regulation of players. Wickham suggested that the Crown began to question whether or not their interests were being served by the civic officers who were appointed to act as the agents of the sovereign.⁶⁷ This suspicion only built in intensity as Henry VIII and his courtiers began to exercise more direct influence in matters of religion. Acts such as the one passed in 1531, which made it necessary for players to carry "a licence from their lord...or from the local Justices," further controlled a player's access to occasions for performance. By another Act passed in 1572, all players had to be kept under the protection of a baron or higher noble and the restrictions against players performing in London were tightened.⁶⁸

Playing without a licence was a punishable offence and in the seventeenth century even a licence did not assure an actor the opportunity to perform. In many provincial towns, civic officials who agreed with the Puritan mistrust of stageplays⁶⁹ paid actors to leave town.¹⁰⁰ By issuing licences to actors, authorities could regulate not only what was said on the stage through script censorship, but also, they passed approval on the actors who said it. If they had any reason to believe a performer was not loyal to the cause of the State and Crown, he could be prevented from taking the stage. Without a proper licence, he would be treated as a rogue and vagabond.

Civic officials found that the most effective weapon that could be used to control theatrical communication was government jurisdiction over the place of performance. When the Church moved their plays outside the confines of their own property, they found their authority often undermined by the powers of the local town fathers who were empowered to

regulate public property on behalf of secular (i.e., either sovereign or commercial) interests.¹⁰¹ As I mentioned above, over time it became apparent that civic interests were not always representative of the interests of the Crown. So among the Church, the City and the Crown, a three-way dispute over the control of places suitable for theatrical performances, especially plays, developed into a contentious political struggle.

With Reformation, the interests of civic authorities who sided with the Protestant cause often matched those of the Crown, while others would side with the Catholic Church. However, when the Crown moved to centralize authority in the State, alignments shifted along different lines. This move to seize absolute power undoubtedly chafed ambitious civic leaders, many of whom, especially those who were situated in London, were of the class of new-wealth. As well, their religious affiliations were no longer simply Protestant and Catholic; there was more than one sect of Protestantism. Complaints lodged by the Bishop of London to the Privy Council represented "a rising tide of Puritan demands that all performances of *plays* be suppressed"¹⁰² because they were impure and profane.

By 1574, the struggle between the State and the City of London reached a peak. The plays and players were now regulated through the licensing Master of the Revels, under the advisement of the Lord Chamberlain and the Privy Council. The same year, the Lord Mayor and his Aldermen passed an Act of Common Council which gave them the right to censor plays performed within their jurisdiction. This policy was never effected and the City officials settled for maintaining control over places of performance.¹⁰³ Often, however, the civic authorities, many of whom were Puritans, had to yield to the interests of private commercial enterprise. If entrepreneurs such as the Burbages could raise sufficient capital to build a playhouse, which they called *The Theatre*, and if they could turn a profit by making plays, it was difficult, according to mercantile principles and political interests, to oppose such a venture.

In 1581, the Privy Council took the initiative and made the Master of the Revels "responsible for censorship of plays, players and *playing places*."¹⁰⁴ The Lord Mayor was also instructed to lift a four-month ban that had been levied on performances.¹⁰⁵ Letters of complaint from the Lord Mayor were sent regularly to the Privy Council.¹⁰⁶ In these letters, the City Fathers objected to stage plays for reasons which included plague (God's wrath), economic losses to the City, the corruption of youth, lewdness, time and money wasted, and distraction from worship and God's work.¹⁰⁷ Records indicate that the Privy Council often agreed with the City's complaints; however, the Lord Chamberlain regularly

intervened because he maintained that public performances ensured quality performances at Court.¹⁰⁸

It is recorded that, in 1599, there were no permanent theatres in the provinces and only licensed players touring out of London were permitted to perform.¹⁰⁹ London tastes and standards in play production became, therefore, the measure of value and quality in performance. This centralized bias would have implications not only for validating playmaking in the provinces, but also for English-speaking dramatic performances wherever actors found places to play and communities willing to participate. These places included colonies such as British North America.

When Elizabeth died and James I was crowned king, James immediately ordered that a restraint be put on playmaking.¹¹⁰ By implementing a system of Royal Household Patents, at first issued to only two companies who leased their own public venues, the Crown gained complete control of playhouses, players and plays.¹¹¹ Playmakers were finally protected by the Crown against attacks by Puritan officials. However, a gesture was made toward the Puritan opposition: performing plays on Sundays was forbidden.¹¹²

The significance of this political move by James I has been examined extensively by Glynne Wickham in terms of commercial interests and the building of new playhouses. What has not been considered in this discussion, however, is the move to isolate the staging of plays from public/popular audiences.¹¹³ Wickham has shown that by 1616 when The Cockpit in Drury Lane was rebuilt as The Phoenix, exclusively for the presentation of stage plays,¹¹⁴ this facility was one of two types of theatre venues in London. Playhouses such as The Hope were reverting to the old-fashioned style of multipurpose "gamehouses" which were more flexible and could still turn a profit by offering a wider variety of "entertainments" if (and when) officials finally banned the stage plays.¹¹⁵

Though it had once been a venue for cock-fights, The Phoenix was refurbished to cater to fashionable audiences who were willing to pay higher prices for more luxurious surroundings. These audiences were probably aware of the experiments at Court and expected more "sophisticated" theatre fare. The chronology shows, too, that the audiences at The Phoenix would likely have had some knowledge and appreciation for "things Italian."

Mitchell and Leys recorded that in 1414 the first Italian scholars were invited to teach in England.¹¹⁶ However, the dissolution of the monasteries and Henry VIII's excommunication, a century later, put a sudden curtailment to Renaissance studies which were gaining momentum. Some scholars turned their backs on neoclassical studies and

began to cultivate a sense of Englishness, which we recognize as cultural nationalism. Others became "apologists for the new humanism"¹¹⁷ and were often suspected of being Papists. During the reign of Elizabeth foreign travel was considered part of a young man's education: "There developed the obnoxious type known as the 'Italianate Englishman,'"¹¹⁸ who was a target for ridicule by the wits. The influence of Renaissance ideas which promoted individualism and scientific rationalization as well as neoclassical aesthetic rules has been placed outside the scope of this narrative. However, it is significant to note that a definitive notion of "art" — itself a rationalized objectification of subjective sensory perception and aesthetic practices — had an impact on communal symbolic expression which continues today to be the primary measure of theatrical value.

Beginning with the strategy first employed by Henry VIII to separate the staging of plays from their religious context in order to neutralize their polemical and political ideologies, plays were discursively normalized as "jocular interludes,"¹¹⁹ suitable for a good night (or afternoon) out. They were considered "games," more like "sport" than "worship." The community was still at play but the efficacy of this ritual was identified as the "harmless fun" of "social recreation." The intent to communicate through plays, to educate the populace to accept changes in the social value system has become neutralized because it is never discussed. Our contemporary experience teaches us, however, that in the wake of political/religious conflicts, a struggle for control of the mass media is inevitable.

When James took control of the staging of plays, in 1603, the ideological separation between plays and religious ritual was complete. It is possible, however, to view Shakespeare's plays in the context of a ritual celebration, sacred gameplaying and worship of the sovereign authority, coded in Romantic chivalry and goddess symbolism. With the publication of Sir Philip Sidney's *Defence of Poesie* in 1595, which was a study of the theatrical conventions of the day,¹²⁰ playmaking became a subject suitable for observation by an outside authority, namely, the learned critic. The critic's evaluation served to regulate interpretation as well as aesthetic values. In this instance, popular performance conventions were evaluated and recoded according to the new set of Renaissance game rules. Certain valued playmaking activities were now assigned the label "art" and a codified system of aesthetic rules grounded in "poesie" became the criteria for measuring plays as "art."

What remained when the theatres were closed in 1642 were two distinct groups of ritual/recreational¹²¹ participants, those who supported the "popular" and those who championed the "literary." To a certain degree, these "communities" were parallel to the

political lines of the Puritan and Royalist camps, although we can not be certain who participated in which group and how they overlapped. Who rejected all theatrical enactments? Who rejected stage plays only? The issues are complex as we have seen.

What is evident is that our discourse tells us more about the smaller elite community, with time and money to spend on "leisure" and "social recreation," and about the fashionable theatre events which were supported by the Court than it does about those who participated as audience or performers in the theatre of popular entertainment.

* * *

7.7 Time Zone Three: Legitimate Theatre / Illegitimate Theatre

Ironically when the theatres were closed at the time of the Commonwealth, the "legitimate" (considered thus by virtue of being allowed to stay open) was not the literary theatre, but rather, the theatre of popular entertainments. We know that traditional plays using "old-fashioned" conventions were presented at these events but they were disguised as "ropedances" and are referred to as "drolls."¹²² With the Restoration, however, the system of awarding Royal Patents was reinstated. These patents allowed friends of the king to open public theatres at which plays, using the new aesthetics founded on neoclassical literary and architectural research, were presented. During the Commonwealth, the neoclassical alternate game rules for playwriting and scenic design had continued to interest some theatre makers, such as William Davenant, even when these practices were not socially recognized or "legitimized."

In 1660, Davenant was able to convince the Master of the Revels that his claim to one of the two patents went back to Charles I and with this patent, Davenant formed the Duke's Men. A second patent went to Thomas Killigrew to start up his company, the King's Men.¹²³ The Royal Patents not only made this alternative theatre legal, but were also designed to curtail competition through a commercial monopoly system that limited the number of companies and playhouses which could perform plays. The ventures of Killigrew and Davenant were strictly supported by profits and therefore required an aura of exclusivity to attract the patronage of wealthy aristocrats. Both men ultimately rejected the existing public venues, The Phoenix and The Red Bull, in favour of specially-designed smaller buildings that could, with a sense of intimacy, house the new stagecraft: perspective scenery and a proscenium arch. Thus, the two "Royal" theatres, Drury Lane (Killigrew) and Lincoln's Inn Fields (Davenant), came into existence.¹²⁴ Here, these

theatre entrepreneurs offered the literary drama in repertory with spectacular theatre events. These theatre spectacles were influenced by the aesthetic codes and strategies of Italian opera and French ballet, incorporated in bisociation with the conventional rules of the English Court Masques as well as the literary drama.

The new public theatres were not "popular" but they were considered "fashionable" with the Court and therefore were favoured by the leisured gentry.¹²⁶ As Pepys's diary attests,¹²⁸ the traditional places to enjoy popular entertainments, such as Bartholomew Fair, were frequented by all classes who enjoyed the hurley-burley atmosphere and the unpredictability of being within the colour and chaos of the fairground experience.¹²⁷ Still, the *alternate* theatre of fashion, founded on principles of rationalized aesthetic order, legislated decorum and aristocratic exclusivity, served a small but powerful community. Its tenuous beginnings, notwithstanding, this new theatre was able to inhabit a relatively secure space within the cultural milieu because it had been institutionalized into existence by means of official articulation (i.e., naming)¹²⁹ through the patent system.

It was not long, however, before playmaking lost its bright veneer as a mere social recreation with the same type of displayed political innocence as a musical concert. A "Popish plot" in 1678 created another political crisis and plays once again fell under suspicion as the source of seditious behaviour. The Government responded by tightening censorship and it was again ordered that all playtexts be approved and licensed.¹²⁸

In 1695, Betterton, the leading actor in the Duke's Men, defied the patent restrictions and reopened Lincoln's Inn Fields, which had been abandoned by Davenant. Betterton did not obtain a licence¹³⁰ and there is no evidence that he experienced recriminations; this opened the way for more unlicensed theatres. The Government, it seems, was paying more attention to the activities at the patent theatres where the Court aristocrats were at play.

The Lord Chamberlain, in 1696, issued another public order that plays could not be acted at the patent theatres without approval from the Master of the Revels' office. This time, plays were to be censored not only for political and religious reasons but also for "obscenities and other scandalous matters and such as any ways offend against ye laws of God and good manners."¹³¹ Two years later, Jeremy Collier published a scathing attack on the stage, using the familiar Puritan rhetoric which condemned plays as immoral and profane.¹³² This theme continued well into the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. It was now considered the jurisdiction of the Lord Chamberlain to act upon the *moral tone* of playtexts as well as on any sign of political and religious sedition.¹³³ Findlater

suggested that this concern with social mores reflected the influence of "a different sector of national taste...the increasingly powerful middle classes...[and] a reaction against the old aristocratic codes."¹³⁴

Each new theatre that was built touched off yet another controversy over public decency.¹³⁵ Finally, in 1735 a bill, supported by Prime Minister Walpole, was introduced to control the number of playhouses and to regulate actors, but it was withdrawn.¹³⁶ This did not mean that the controversy had been subdued. Rather, the insolent attitude of play-makers such as Henry Fielding, who dared to use stage parody and satire to criticize the governing establishment (including the Prime Minister) only exacerbated the situation. But threats of legal action did not deter Fielding's sardonic barbs.¹³⁷

Under the guise of protecting public morality, another bill was introduced by Walpole in 1737 that amended previous laws controlling rogues and vagabonds. It targeted for arrest professional players who were found acting in places that did not have a Royal Patent or a licence from the Lord Chamberlain.¹³⁸ Censorship was also at issue and it was proposed that song lyrics as well as stage dialogue should be subject to scrutiny and approval.¹³⁹

Upon the passing of the bill, the Office of the Examiner and Deputy Examiner were established to deal with the necessary paperwork.¹⁴⁰ Performances of stage plays were henceforth allowed only "in the City of Westminster and its liberties and the places of royal residence."¹⁴¹ The only theatres which were "legal" (i.e., licensed for the "legitimate" spoken drama) were the patent theatres: Drury Lane and Covent Garden. As a result of this action, the Haymarket, the theatres in Goodman's Fields and Lincoln's Inn Fields and theatres in York and Bristol closed immediately.¹⁴² Any occasions or venues for popular entertainments now fell outside the established theatre institution. These performance events were part of that grey area, the *paratre*, which did not exist as *theatre* because it was not regulated by the Government's theatrical laws.

The Stage Licensing Act of 1737 reaffirmed the power of the Lord Chamberlain to prohibit at his own discretion any operas, plays or theatrical entertainments which did not meet with public standards. Playtexts were to be submitted by the theatre manager two weeks in advance of the performance date for approval and licensing. In the institutionalized theatre, improvisation and ad-libbing were illegal; still, Garrick and other actors in the patent theatres built their reputations on their ability to extemporize and mimic within the parameters of the scripted role.¹⁴³

A side-effect of dramatic censorship was the development of "eccentric genres"¹⁴⁴ which did not employ the **spoken** word. Pantomime and dumb show as theatrical forms became popular vehicles for political satire and other social commentary on subjects that were otherwise taboo.¹⁴⁵ Another new form, *burlletta*, originally a burlesque of opera in which dialogue was replaced by recitative accompanied by music, became a useful umbrella under which all kinds of plays could be developed. Technically, these stage events did not break the letter of the law.¹⁴⁶ Joseph Donohue wrote: "The term *burlletta* had originally no taint of the illegitimate about it. The patent theatres had a right to it as they did to ballad opera...or any other native or naturalized English theatrical product."¹⁴⁷

Michael Booth wrote that after 1750, the theatre (i.e., the institutionalized theatre) experienced a period of stability. To the establishment playmakers, the threat of competition from the theatre of popular entertainments was insignificant: "the nature and class structure of their audiences [were] unchanging; patterns of dramatic taste [were] firmly established."¹⁴⁸ Farce and pantomime were extremely popular at the patent theatres and were presented in "afterpieces" on the same bill with tragedies, comedies and ballad operas along with other variety fare such as orchestral music, songs, dances, specialty numbers and spectacular processions. Booth describes this "eclectic" state of theatrical affairs as an "anarchy of dramatic forms" indicative of a "coarsening of taste, a new vulgarity...[an] appeal to sensation and spectacle, a greater delight in low comedy and outrageous costume."¹⁴⁹

The playwrights who wrote for the establishment theatres may have been legislated into submitting to censorship but those theatre practitioners who were willing to take the risk and operate outside the institution, in the nether realms of the paratheatrical, were ingenious at finding ways to circumvent the restrictions placed on theatre venues and the spoken drama. One useful strategy was to offer dramatic performances at unlicensed establishments such as in gardens, fields and large rooms where refreshments were served. At these events, managers simply bypassed the literary drama which was a commodity encumbered with too many regulations and turned instead to other forms of dramatic entertainment: puppet shows, *burlletta*, dumb shows, musical burlesques or equestrian spectacles all presented on a variety bill.

In 1751, the Disorderly Houses Act¹⁵⁰ opened the way for the licensing (legalization) of "places of 'music, dancing, and public entertainment'," affording them official status as theatrical entities. Booth pointed out that the government officials "never thought that this kind of licence, authorizing entertainments quite different from the patent

theatres, and usually in places remote from the centre, could ever infringe upon and threaten the monopoly, but eventually this is what happened."¹⁶¹ The chronology supports Booth's observation: the entries through to the end of the century and well into the nineteenth indicate a proliferation of nonliterary dramatic forms as well as places for their performance which proved popular with all audiences and were created specifically to avoid the over-regulated literary drama.

Wickham noted that "not until relatively late in the reign of Charles I was any serious attempt made, and then somewhat tentatively, to separate revells according to genre and to *confine each to its appropriate environment*."¹⁶² With the Restoration, however, the scholar-critic in the tradition of Sir Philip Sidney, found a welcome home in the institutionalized theatre, where he provided the authoritative discourse which enabled the systematic ordering and naming of performance events.

Genre¹⁶³ is conventionally associated with literary types such as tragedy or comedy.¹⁶⁴ Awareness of a particular designation such as the relationship between a specific genre and its appropriate environment implies the existence of an **economy of discourse**¹⁶⁵ which is grounded by a learned system of values, in this case the principles of neoclassical humanism. As we have seen in this study, commentary about forms of performance contributes to the materialization of these theatrical forms as **knowledge** within the consciousness of the public domain.

The institutionalized theatre was, by the early eighteenth century, supported by professional writers (informed critics) such as Joseph Addison,¹⁶⁶ who set the standards for fashionable taste. But another way of looking at published theatrical commentary is to see it as the equivalent of advertising. Managers soon realized the commercial benefits, in terms of marketing and publicity, when a theatre event became the topic of public discussion. Critical commentary was often couched in a writing style which is called "puffery." As it is today, distinguishing between advertising and criticism was difficult; yet both served to name and make material theatrical genres as well as to evaluate them as cultural products and to code them according to a prescribed hierarchy of aesthetic standards.

Raising the issue of the manipulation of people's attitudes, beliefs, and values as well as knowledge about theatre production has brought this narrative to a point of conjunction with the broader issues of my research: how we talk about theatre and its practice. It is probable that once writers began to appreciate that there was a readership for theatrical commentary and therefore profits to be made, more print space was given

over to writing about events at both the patent theatres and at the other "minor" theatres. We must recognize, however, that from the outset this commentary was necessarily an extension of the preferences of the educated (literate) classes.

It is noted in the chronology that in 1711, *The Spectator* published an extensive description of some popular theatre events of the day.¹⁵⁷ Subsequent entries indicate that there does exist a significant quantity of discourse about popular entertainments; the popular tradition in the English-speaking theatre is far from invisible or unmarked. Yet, it is also evident that these theatrical events have rarely been taken seriously or treated as culturally significant. The coded action performed by *The Spectator's* reviewer is identified by Strutt as "[to] ridicule."¹⁵⁸ My interest in this documentation has shifted therefore from concern with marking the popular to one of ideological evaluation: How have these popular events been viewed and ranked within our theatrical common knowledge? What word symbols are used to make them discursively real?

The dialectical tension within the "Legitimate/Illegitimate" Time Zone is centred around the use of binary vocabularies which distinguish what is and is not "legal." The idea of legitimacy takes on nuances of meaning which are further complicated by discursive associations and the use of commentary for persuasive purposes. The persuasion was not only to encourage attendance but also to educate a populace toward adhering to a unified order of thought and behaviour. For instance, in 1833, a review by Charles Lamb in which the paintings of John Martin were described as "theatrical," discussed Martin's work in terms of "legitimate" and "illegitimate" theatre. The "illegitimate" was used to indicate the pejorative because, to Lamb, "theatrical" implied the "exaggerated" and "unnatural."¹⁵⁹

The chronology marks several instances of the word "legitimate" applied to the spoken drama or to theatre events which were by law allowed only at the two patent theatres. There is some question in my mind that the eighteenth-century critics actually applied these specific terms,¹⁶⁰ although as we saw above, the spirit of ridicule in critical discourse was a discursive strategy which indicated cultural value. Audience members, whether they were literate or not, who wished to be considered part of the fashionable crowd should claim allegiance to certain social communities as a play and should reject others according to the dictates of such authorities as *The Spectator* and *The Tatler*.

Another social factor which comes into view in the chronology is the impact of the migration of people to the cities to seek employment in industry. This shift in demographics changed the dynamics of commercial theatre production in many significant ways. New working-class communities, in the London suburbs and the provinces, created new

audiences for entertainments and those who developed dramatic theatre events responded in kind.¹⁶¹ We have already noted that the umbrella term "burletta" was used by many theatre managers to disguise plays that today we categorize as "melodramas."¹⁶² All sorts of dramatic events, including pantomime which incorporated Anglicized versions of the Italian Commedia characters and reintroduced "the clown" to the English stage,¹⁶³ puppet shows which exploited familiar tales and the traditional morality characters such as Vice, and scenic spectacles which integrated people and animals, colour and light, music and sound effects in massive quantities, offered audiences dramatic fare that was not easily censored by the examiner. Much of the meaning of these performances was generated in movement and gesture or scenic display. The development of new technologies which were introduced into the theatre with great fanfare and "puffery" (e.g., deLoutherburg's Eido-phusikon¹⁶⁴ in 1781, panorama in 1794,¹⁶⁵ and Daguerre's diorama in 1823,¹⁶⁶) generated an excitement for theatrical performance that could not be matched by the spoken drama.

The opposition to the theatre on moral grounds only intensified with the influx of potential theatregoers to the cities from the rural districts. John Wesley issued a strong protest to the civic authorities of Bristol in 1784, when the proposal to build a Theatre Royal was announced. Wesley wrote:

'Most of the present stage entertainments sap the foundation of all religion, as they naturally tend to efface all traces of piety and seriousness out of the minds of men; but...they are peculiarly hurtful to a trading city, giving a wrong turn to youth especially, gay, trifling, and directly opposite to the spirit of industry and close application to business.'¹⁶⁷

In 1804, George Legge, the past president of the Society for the Suppression of Vice, was named Lord Chamberlain. Surprisingly, Legge, now Earl of Dartmouth, was not an ally of the patent theatres which still remained traditional ties to the aristocracy. Rather, he was friendly toward the popular or minor theatres which were frequented by all classes. Booth explained the effect of Legge's appointment:

He granted licences to new theatres, as he was empowered to do....Seven licences, among those to the Olympic and the Adelphi....[These] minors were permitted to play the 'illegitimate' drama, a term of inexact meaning generally signifying melodrama, pantomime, spectacle, burlesque and anything with some musical accompaniment and a few songs.¹⁶⁸

This action caused a mercantile imbalance; the patent theatres found it impossible to compete for audiences at a time when both Drury Lane and Covent Garden had undertaken expensive renovations and enlargement.¹⁶⁹ The theatre managers decided, therefore, that they had to change their programming according to the market demand. The minor theatres could not perform the regulated "legitimate" drama, but there was nothing to stop the patents from presenting spectacle and pantomime or the "illegitimate."¹⁷⁰ The patents retained one advantage: they could legally use spoken dialogue within any of the popular theatre genres.¹⁷¹ The audience targeted by this strategy at the patents was the upper middle class, "men of letters and research, merchants and respectable tradesmen"¹⁷² who did not go to the opera or the theatre because these activities were not considered "wholesome."

In the context of education, the fact that the theatre was a mass communication system which did not depend on literacy was not wasted on the country's moral leaders. In 1814, John Galt, an editor of plays for publication, wrote in his remarks: "the stage has become almost as great an organ of public instruction as the pulpit."¹⁷³ He, therefore, supported censorship as a way to make sure the general public was educated according to the dominant social mores and values. However, to many, Galt included, these (middle class) values were not the same standards of behaviour held by the Lord Chamberlain, an aristocrat.

At this juncture, we are approaching a point in this historical time zone which corresponds to the time frame of the theatrical narratives (examined in Chapter 5) that describe the development of theatre practices in English Canada. That the language and issues have a familiar ring is not coincidental; in some respects, Canada, the colony, was seen as a cultural extension of England, bearing a relationship to London similar to that of the English provinces.¹⁷⁴

The decades which close this third time zone are marked by further reassessments of the theatre regulations, and lead finally to the erasure of the laws giving sole monopoly of the spoken drama to the two patent theatres. In 1832, a House of Commons Select Committee chaired by Edward Bulwer-Lytton was convened to look into issues of theatrical licensing, copyright and censorship.¹⁷⁵ The committee's report resulted in the tabling of the Dramatic Performances Bill "which would allow any licensed theatre to play the legitimate drama and would gather into the hands of the Lord Chamberlain all authority over theatres."¹⁷⁶ This bill was defeated in the House of Lords. Ten years later, a second attempt to pass the same legislation, now known as "Bulwer's Act," met with success. The

Lord Chamberlain was given power over the licensing of all theatrical venues. Now, as central authority over the institutionalization of the theatre, the Lord Chamberlain "was able to control the expansion of theatrical enterprise by vetoing applications and could enforce closure of theatres."¹⁷⁷

Generally speaking, the number of minor theatres expanded. Many saloons which housed small theatres for entertainments turned "legitimate" by offering scripted plays in dialogue for the working classes, usually within a variety format.¹⁷⁸ There remained only a fine line between these "legitimate" houses which attempted to attract a better class of audience and the other theatre, "music hall." Likely the differences were clearer to the public who read the advertising or other published commentary than to those who attended the actual event. In these "legitimate" houses, however, attempts were made by management and theatre patrons to follow a prescribed standard of proper decorum.¹⁷⁹ These rules included refraining from smoking or drinking in the place of performance, a practice that continues to mark the "illegitimate."¹⁸⁰

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7.8 Time Zone Four: High Art / Popular Culture

We have entered the final time zone which leads us to think about the contemporary concerns that contextualize this research — in particular, the issue of cultural narratives which influence knowledge, practice and ultimately the management of cultural resources. The contemporary narrative that separates cultural practices into a binary relationship coded by the words "high" and "popular" is so familiar that these words appear innocuous (i.e., normal and apolitical). In fact, we know this narrative is like all the others we have been examining in this research; it houses ideologically coded messages about hegemonic value systems.

In this section of Performance III, I strategically endeavoured to trace the genealogy of this "high/popular" binary because I believe that it operates semiotically as an index of our (English-Canadian) colonial past. I noted above, with reference to the "legitimate/illegitimate," how language takes on the ring of familiarity as the time zone begins to overlap the time frame of the colonial settlement in English Canada. I acknowledge that this is not necessarily a straightforward correspondence. But, when we separate our primary sources from the various secondary commentaries and allow for historicity and authenticating conventions, when we adjust for the lag time that occurs in all

communication processes and account for the many particularities of living in various regions of the Canadian "frontier," it becomes clear that our English-Canadian cultural leaders have been engaged in a discourse that mirrors that which originated in the mother country, England. This may seem so obvious as to be facile: Why would it be any other way when so many of these leaders came from England?¹⁸¹

My response would be that the **colonial fact** is **not** at issue today; we acknowledge our colonial heritage. What is at issue is the **postcolonial fact**: Have we moved past these culturally encoded narratives or do we continue to reinforce them by reinvesting in the value systems which they represent? Are these codes so familiar and normal that the colonial fact operates **invisibly** within our collective psyche? Has the colonial fact become so **transparent** that we do not recognize it when it is still at work?

In *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies*,¹⁸² there is an essay by Paul DiMaggio titled "Cultural Entrepreneurship in Nineteenth-Century Boston: The Creation of an Organizational Base for High Culture in America." This essay was one of the source texts which oriented the time frame of this section. DiMaggio writes:

The distinction between high and popular culture, in its American version, emerged in the period between 1850 and 1900 out of the efforts of urban elites to build organizational forms that, first, isolated high culture and, second, differentiated it from popular culture.¹⁸³

This periodization seems to be early when compared to English-Canadian narratives such as Hector Charlesworth's *Candid Chronicles*¹⁸⁴ and C.W. Handscomb's 1904 critique of Ibsen's *Ghosts* in the *Manitoba Free Press*, "High art they call it!"¹⁸⁵ However, Maria Tippett, in her recent text, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission*,¹⁸⁶ cites several examples of "cultural institutions, patrons, and organizations prior to the outset of this century [the twentieth]" including "Montreal's Theatre Royal (1825)" that took as their collective agenda "maintaining status, upholding tradition, or fostering change" by promoting art and culture that was "primarily British" and different from "folk" ["New-Canadian"] culture and "popular ["commercial" "American"] culture" (p. 7). This "cultural activity belonged to leisure time, to the amateur" (p. 7). It "[stressed] the ennobling nature of 'getting to know ...the best that has been thought and said in the world'" (p. 5).¹⁸⁷ An addendum to these motivations was an "explicit concern with 'education'" (pp. x-xi). The alliance between the promotion of "the

arts" and the promotion of "education" should not surprise the reader in view of the entries in the chronology which repeatedly document how the theatre was historically used "to impose a uniform pattern of life and thought."¹⁸⁸ In other words, the theatre was used to inform and educate a population to subscribe to a dominant system of values.

The words "educate" and "school" have been included in my keyword list specifically with reference to Time Zone Four. Beginning in the eighteenth century, the chronology indicates that there was a social interest in providing some sort of education for the factory classes and the less fortunate. These movements began with Sunday Schools for religious instruction in alternative Christian denominations such as those organized by the Methodists¹⁸⁹ and Quakers.¹⁹⁰ In 1820, the Church of England contributed to promoting "the Education of the Lower Orders" by organizing Parish Schools for "Bible-teaching" only.¹⁹¹ Texts indicate that these schools were founded less in the interests of conversion than they were for teaching social decorum and maintaining social order.¹⁹²

Within the same time frame we find that the chronology supports the case made above that theatre was used to educate and inform. No doubt the "educational value" became a rhetorical argument advanced by theatre managers to counter the moralists who would assert that theatre was profane and a waste of hours that could be directed toward productive work. However, the fact still remains that, like John Galt, many recognized that theatre could serve to advance the cause of the dominant social agenda. The same coded narratives that were imparted from the pulpit or the printed page could be delivered from the stage to all classes in theatrical ways that were engaging and entertaining.¹⁹³

The function of theatrical presentation in the context of education was not necessarily to use dialogue or dramatic situation to teach a lesson in the manner of social problem plays. This would have been impossible in the "illegitimate" theatres before 1843 and too much text meant too little profit in the patent theatres. Practitioners instead turned to visual art to give an air of respectability to theatre productions by "realizing"¹⁹⁴ on stage famous paintings, or other artworks.¹⁹⁵ In tableaux, these realizations sometimes constituted a performance event or "turn" on a variety bill. When they proved to be popular with audiences, famous paintings were incorporated into or provided the subject matter for many melodramas.¹⁹⁶ In 1811, at the Surrey, a melodrama based on Hogarth's *Apprentices* was advertised as a "moral illustration."¹⁹⁷

Meisel writes that the term "illustration" was used to imply that there was "an appeal to instruction." Illustrations to texts were considered to be helpful aids for the reader; illustrations presented to the audience would enable them to receive the proper

message. Often these staged illustrations were idealized versions of a literary idea, rather than literal interpretations of a text.¹⁹⁸

The words "realization" and "illustration" have figured into commentary about the literary theatre as well. Booth described Macready's 1838 production of *The Tempest* at Covent Garden "as a physical and pictorial realization of the text."¹⁹⁹ Charles Kean's production of *Richard III* (1854) at the Princess's could be viewed as "a valuable school of antiquarian illustration and a living lecture on the past,...instruction mixed with entertainment."²⁰⁰ The playbill included scholarly "manifestos" because Kean's target audience was the educated middle class. His productions appealed to those who were interested in history as well as literature and in endeavours which contributed to self-edification in the pursuit of greater expectations.

"Research" and "accuracy," translated into stage spectacle, brought another measure of legitimacy as well as entertainment to the theatre. Well-publicized archeological discoveries contributed to Kean's productions during the 1850s and documented artifacts afforded period authenticity to the Bancrofts' *The School for Scandal* in 1874 and *The Rivals* in 1884. These aesthetic choices appealed to a segment of the population that had not considered the theatre a place suitable for their time "at play." Queen Victoria's public support of Charles Kean and of the theatre also contributed to the new air of respectability.²⁰¹ Learning about foreign places or ancient times through historically accurate scenic effects added reasons other than mere pleasure for attending the theatre. Consequently, Booth writes, by 1866, the year of yet another Select Committee on the Licensing of Theatres, the goals of many of the "legitimate" theatre managers had been met: the "educated middle class" were finally filling the seats.²⁰² By 1890, "the middle-class conquest of the theatre auditorium, and consequently of the [literary] drama, was complete."²⁰³

The Select Committees of both 1866 and 1892 were formed in response to the competition experienced by West End theatres as a result of the popularity of the music halls. Extempore routines and other comic business, the trade marks of these "illegitimate" theatre events, had been exempt from censorship.²⁰⁴ They had always been considered innocuous entertainments for pleasure, not serious theatre. Demands were made that music halls should be regulated in the same manner as other theatres where improvisation was illegal. It was feared that the institutionalized theatre would deteriorate into "moral chaos"²⁰⁵ if the music halls were not better controlled because popular game rules would influence the struggling West End theatres to follow what was commercially successful.

In the discourse, "music hall" becomes emblematic (a semiotic index) of an audience type who frequented the popular theatre. If the desirable middle-class audience was "fashionable," "socially respectable" and "intellectually cultured"²⁰⁶ or "refined" and "intelligent",²⁰⁷ then the *other* audience was "uncultivated," "coarser," "small," of an "inferior class," "ignorant" and "degraded".²⁰⁸ Music hall was identified as the theatre for the lower middle class and working-class communities — "the vulgar" who favoured the "sentimentality" offered at the "halls."²⁰⁹ When elements of music hall entered the pantomime, critics described this development as the "descent of the barbarians."²¹⁰ This vocabulary is meaningful in light of the ideological encoding and dominant narratives that are at play.²¹¹

Whose interests were being served by this rhetoric? How were the dominant narratives employed to bolster the hegemony of the ruling establishment now identified as "educated and upper middle class"? Public investment in these coded narratives promoted and reinforced the social values of the middle class; these values were not only desirable but became the norm. The theatre that served the "upper middle class at play" was deemed superior because it served the dominant value system.

As we saw above, the adjunct to using the stage for "illustration," which was motivated by instruction and edification, was the notion of "realization." This aesthetic game plan, as we know from Kean's productions, incorporated accurate research and audio-visual detail to support the "realization" of the text on stage which could then be described as "accurate" and "real." After 1850, the stage illusion, a self-contained unit under the rules of Renaissance neoclassicism, not only had to allow the audience to suspend disbelief, but also was considered a "representation" rather than a "presentation."²¹² This discursive shift has far-reaching implications for theatre practice. The goal of the theatre game changed considerably when the stage became a direct manifestation of a set of textual givens.²¹³ The transformative play of **absence** ("is not") and **presence** ("is") that is the basis of theatricality²¹⁴ or theatrical communication is denied in theatre practice grounded by the idea of mimetic "representation." The stage, in terms of planning the theatre game, became theoretically a medium that *represented* a scene (e.g., "a street in London") as if that scene were fully present ("*this is* a street in London"). In other words, it was assumed that the stage scene directly corresponded to another offstage reality; the stage was a *mimesis* of reality.²¹⁵ All game rules were devised then with the specific intent of sustaining the illusion of presence. This change in aesthetics was made manifest in theatrical practice by the style we call "Realism."²¹⁶

The chronology marks the aesthetic shift to Realism through the employment of the associated theatrical strategies known as "illustration" and "realization." The onstage execution scene in the 1829 production of *Black-Eyed Susan* at the Surrey, according to Booth, impressed the audience as a "replica of the real thing."²¹⁷ Once theatre managers recognized that they could further justify theatre practice in the minds of the "refined" middle class by appealing to their intellectual interests, the use of stage spectacle and anti-quarian detail was shored by the preferred aesthetic of replication.

In *The Rent Day* (1832) attention was paid to detail, offering the audience an inside look at the life of humble English farmers. Meisel described this iconography as "true but vulgar."²¹⁸ For urban audiences, the portrayal of the lot of country people would have been removed from everyday experience in the city; to Londoners, rural life likely seemed strange and exotic or a distant memory, rather than "true to life." After 1850, the productions devised by T.W. Robertson were more accurate in their "truth to texture and experience of ordinary [middle class] life."²¹⁹ Robertson added some rules to the game of Realism by toning down theatrical effects, that is, by employing an element of "understatement." He directed actors to refrain from excessive physical action, eliminating the conventional posed attitudes that had traditionally been used to convey the meaning of a dramatic situation. He scripted the dialogue in middle-class vernacular, in appropriate accents. This dialogue was structured on the "counterpoint" of everyday conversation, eschewing rhetoric and exaggeration for "proper" dramatic effect.²²⁰

Robertson's contributions to the aesthetics of Realism reinforced the authority of the dramatist in play production, so that, in general, the hierarchical position of the playwright in the middle-class theatre was advanced. This shift in the dynamics of theatre production displaced the actor-producer from his primary role as creator to a secondary role as actor-interpreter. As a result, the discursive focus of the theatre event was placed on the literary drama and the value of the production was measured in terms of the literary text and its "realization" on stage.

The Realist aesthetics, so well-documented by Michael Booth in terms of stage spectacle in the nineteenth-century theatre, served the popular genres as well as the literary, although the context in Booth's research remains the establishment theatre.²²¹ Booth records many examples of the attention to detail and accuracy which contributed to a life-like stage picture. However, these aesthetics were often pushed to extremes according to critics; they were not used with proportionate "restraint" and "balance."²²² The pursuit of real-life actualization in Augustus Harris' 1890 production of *A Million of Money* at

Drury Lane was a case in point. "The real Louis Seize antiques and reproductions...lacked stage effect, and Fitzgerald and Shaw protested that the impression left by real articles rather than those of stage manufacture was of total unreality."²²³ Even as late as 1901, Beerholm Tree was defending the aesthetics of Realism and its contributions to the theatre of illusion: "Is illusion destroyed by getting as near as we can to a picture of the real thing?"²²⁴

The marking of Time Zone Four began with a consideration of the binary "high art"/"popular culture." Ironically, the only entry in the chronology which mentions "high art" is with reference to pantomime. Augustus Harris is quoted as saying: "Pantomime is not considered *high art*. It is my ambition to make it so."²²⁵ Why would Harris have invested his resources in turning a popular theatre event into high art? The answer is in the dominant narratives and the cultural value placed on "art" as a means of legitimating practice. Without an affiliation to "art," pantomime would always be considered a lesser theatrical form, irrespective of its long tradition and commercial gains. Longevity and profits were not measures of success.

It is difficult to disentangle the word "art" from the primary and secondary commentaries in the chronology.²²⁶ However, the instance of the applied terminology which refers to "art" is greater after 1875 than before.²²⁷ The central role played by the writer in the theatrical process after this date may be mere coincidence; I have no way of proving a direct cause and effect relationship.²²⁸ Rather, I think it is more in keeping with the epistemology of this study to consider the interrelationship of the **discourse** (dominant encoded narratives such as the championing of the playwright by the critic William Archer, also a playwright and translator of Ibsen's plays²²⁹), the **practice** (the "mainstream"²³⁰ theatre as a literary-practitioner's theatre rather than a theatre-practitioner's²³¹ theatre) and **knowledge** (the valorization of the literary model for the theatre event) and the **legitimation of theatre** as a worthwhile cultural activity, if it is categorized as "art." I would maintain that any attempt to separate primary commentary from secondary commentary in order to isolate the instances of references to "art" in conjunction with theatre practice would be superfluous because the dominant narrative which links **value** to **culture** to **high art** remains at play even in contemporary discourse. This code is found as an **authenticating convention** in all the texts used in Performance III, which were published after 1875.²³²

ENDNOTES

¹ I believe that conventional teleological thinking processes, founded on Aristotelian logic or rationalization, are learned behaviours which set up preprogrammed responses within us so that we come to reading and writing anticipating the end before we have hardly approached the beginning. I refer to this as the "anxiety for closure," which demands of us that we "get to the point"; "don't ramble"; "try not to exhaust the reader"; "be clear, direct and say what we mean." This issue, which has important implications for the accumulation as well as the distribution of knowledge, is taken up in the debate between Jacques Derrida and John Searle published as *Limited Inc.*

² In *The Open Work*, Eco has provided a "poetics of the open work" (pp. 1-23) which I have taken as my theoretical foundation for the enactment of Performance III. This poetics accounts for a scholarship which reflects:

1. "the fundamental openness of every perceptual and intellectual process" (p. 71);
2. the deliberate disordering of information which extends "the methodology and logic of indeterminacy borrowed from scientific disciplines" (p. 65);
3. "a decentring [of information] that permits something like the dissolution, the liquefaction, of static perceptual forms, thus facilitating operational mobility — and thus creating infinite possibilities for new structures" (p. 73);
4. an awareness that "the more unexpected the solution, the greater the pleasure when [insight] occurs" (p. 75);
5. my intent to facilitate, through the accumulation of information in a database, historical narratives that have the potential to be reader-directed as well as author-directed.

³ Samuel McKechnie, *Popular Entertainments through the Ages* (London: Sampson, Low, Marston, n.d.).

⁴ R.J. Broadbent, *A History of Pantomime* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1901).

⁵ Winifred Smith, "The Commedia dell'Arte in Elizabethan and Jacobean England," *The Commedia dell'Arte* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1912).

⁶ Cyril Beaumont, "Harlequin in England" and "Some English Harlequins," *The History of Harlequin* (New York: Benjamin Blom, 1926).

⁷ David Mayer, *Harlequin in His Element: The English Pantomime, 1806-1836* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1969).

⁸ Virginia Scott, "The Infancy of English Pantomime: 1716-1723," in *Educational Theatre Journal*, 24(2), (May 1972), pp. 125-34.

⁹ Raymond Mander and Joe Mitchenson, *Pantomime: A Story in Pictures* (London: Peter Davies, 1973).

¹⁰ David Wiles, *Shakespeare's Clown: Actor and Text in the Elizabethan Playhouse* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹¹ Marion Lomax, *Stage Images and Traditions: Shakespeare to Ford* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

¹² Joseph Strutt, *Sports and Pastimes of the People of England* (London: Chatto and Windus, 1876).

¹³ E.K. Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Volumes I and II* (London: Oxford University Press, 1903).

¹⁴ Glynne Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660: Volume Two 1576 to 1660, Part I* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1963).

¹⁵ Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660: Volume One 1300 to 1576*.

¹⁶ Wickham, *Early English Stages 1300 to 1660: Volume Two 1576 to 1660, Part II* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1972).

¹⁷ Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*. Originally published in 1974.

¹⁸ O.E. Hardison, *Christian Rite and Christian Drama in the Middle Ages: Essays in the Origin and Early History of Modern Drama* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1965).

¹⁹ George Speaight, *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, 2nd ed. (London: Robert Hale, 1990).

- ²⁰ Michael Booth, "Spectacle as Production Style on the Victorian Stage," in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 8(32), (1979), pp. 8-20.
- ²¹ Michael Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre 1850-1910* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1981).
- ²² Joseph Donohue, "Burletta and the Early Nineteenth-Century English Theatre," in *Nineteenth-Century Theatre Research*, 1(1), (Spring 1973), pp. 29-51.
- ²³ Sybil Rosenfeld, "Master Richardson - 'The Great Showman'," in David Mayer and Kenneth Richards (Eds.), *Western Popular Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1977), pp. 105-22.
- ²⁴ Richard Findlater, *Banned! A Review of Theatrical Censorship in Britain* (London: MacGibbon and Kee, 1967).
- ²⁵ L.W. Conolly, *The Censorship of English Drama: 1737-1824* (San Marino: Huntington Library, 1976).
- ²⁶ John Russell Stephens, *The Censorship of English Drama: 1824-1901* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1980).
- ²⁷ Michael Hattaway, *Elizabethan Popular Theatre: Plays in Performance* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1982).
- ²⁸ Robert Graves, *The White Goddess*, soft cover ed., 1961 (London: Faber and Faber, 1948).
- ²⁹ Barbara Walker, *The Secrets of the Tarot: Origins, History and Symbolism* (New York: Harper and Row, 1984).
- ³⁰ Barbara Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects* (New York: Harper Collins, 1988).
- ³¹ The Goddess is culturally coded by many names but the most familiar, which signifies her universal entity, is Gaia, the Earth Mother.
- ³² The importance of contextualizing my theatrical data has recently been reinforced by two publications: Bruce A. McConachie, "Realizing a Postpositivist Theatre History," in *New Theatre Quarterly*, X(39), (August 1994), pp. 217-22 and Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance: Radical Theatre as Cultural Intervention*.

³³ Robert McCrum, William Cran and Robert MacNeil, *The Story of English*, rev. ed., 1992 (London: Faber and Faber, 1986).

³⁴ Michael Booth, "The Social and Literary Context," *The Revels History of Drama in English, Volume VI: 1750-1880* (London: Methuen and Company, 1975), pp. 3-57.

³⁵ I remained alert to the authenticating conventions and interpretive paradigm for the theatre as a way of validating my earlier analysis. I would argue that these conventional devices are what keep our discourse about theatre practice in English Canada locked inside "the garrison mentality" of colonial thinking. These "locks" exist as conventions which are normalized and therefore invisible.

³⁶ This "popular theatre" has now become a field of information coded by words collected from my analysis in Chapter 5 and Appendix A, as well as the verbal associations made in Performance II. These words become signs (indices) which tell me in readings of other texts when I have encountered theatre practices which could be designated as "popular."

³⁷ This structure came to mind because I have had frequent cause as a student to consult Bernard Grun's *The Timetables of History: Horizontal Linkage of People and Events* (New York: Touchstone Books, 1982), which is organized according to date beginning "-5000 to -4001." The absolute accuracy of the dating system has never been of concern in this performance because I subscribe to McLuhan's theory that numbers are only significant in relative relationships (*Understanding Media*, pp. 104-14). This ordering mechanism still allows me to think of time in relative terms rather than absolutes.

³⁸ Grun, *The Timetables of History* (see footnote #37 above), and Martin Banham (Ed.), *The Cambridge Guide to World History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1988).

³⁹ The idea of "keywords" comes from Raymond Williams by way of Dick Hebdige: "Raymond Williams indicates in *Keywords* that the more complexly and contradictorily nuanced a word is, the more likely it is to have formed the focus for historically significant debates, to have occupied a semantic ground in which something previous and important was felt to be embedded" (*Hiding in the Light*, p. 182). My list of words is not as highly-charged as this quotation would imply; however, many of the words are included because during the course of this research I have found them to hold "nuances" of particular historical significance.

⁴⁰ In compiling this list, I have attempted to present the words as they appear in the chronology or as they can be accessed. For example, where a singular form is indicated the text may appear in the appendix as a plural. This is significant for word forms such as "woman/women." The reader is reminded that the computer will not access the word unless the spelling is the same. When unusual spellings, such as "degyse" for "disguise," occur, I have included the variant in the list; but I would recommend that the reader **explore** the chronology using various word forms, roots and derivations.

⁴¹ Mitchell and Leys, p. 224; appears in Appendix B under 1414. Please note that if a particular date is mentioned in the text, it will not appear in the relevant endnote.

⁴² Wickham on stagecraft: *Early English Stages, Volume One*, pp. xxvii, xxix; on provincial playing: *Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 147-48; on actresses on stage: *Volume One*, pp. 271-72; on the awarding of patents: *Volume Two, Part I*, p. 138.

⁴³ Meisel, pp. 351-56, 369; appears in Appendix B under 1840. Also Meisel, pp. 356, 358; appearing in Appendix B under 1867.

⁴⁴ Victor Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre: The Human Seriousness of Play* (New York: Performing Arts Journal Publications, 1982) and *The Anthropology of Performance* (New York: PAJ Publications, 1986).

⁴⁵ This term was used by Roland Barthes in *The Pleasure of the Text* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1975) and has been circulating through theoretical discourse to denote the type of sensual pleasure, or bliss, that is aroused when one engages in aesthetic activities. See also John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*, p. 50.

⁴⁶ This is supported by theories proposed by Richard Schechner (as well as Victor Turner); see *Between Theatre and Anthropology* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1985), *Performance Theory*, and more recently, *The Future of Ritual* (New York: Routledge, 1993).

⁴⁷ Turner uses the term **liminoid** to distinguish theatre performances in which participation is voluntary from ritual performances in which participation is mandatory, but I believe this fine distinction is unnecessary as the mode of behaviour (play), which concerns me here, is the same in both ritual and theatre. The word liminal was first coined by the anthropologist

Arnold van Gennep in his 1908 study *Rites of Passage*. Turner acknowledges this source and his manipulation of the concept.

⁴⁸ Most play theorists who adhere to these notions take as their authority Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens: A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* (Boston: The Beacon Press, 1950). New research has moved beyond this theory, although Huizinga is still acknowledged as a pioneer in the **serious** study of play behaviour. See also Adam Blatner and Allee Blatner, *The Art of Play* (New York: Human Sciences Press, Inc., 1988); Stephen Nachmanovich, *Free Play: The Power of Improvisation in Life and the Arts* (Los Angeles: Jeremy Tarcher, Inc., 1990). Also, "Game and Play," *Yale French Studies*, 41, (1968), an issue devoted to game and play theory; in particular, refer to Eugene Fink, "The Oasis of Happiness: Toward an Ontology of Play," pp. 19-30.

⁴⁹ Turner, *From Ritual to Theatre*, p. 27.

⁵⁰ Turner, p. 27; also Richard Kertzer, *Ritual, Politics and Power* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988), pp. 8-12; and Barbara Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, pp. 166-67.

⁵¹ See Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 48-54 and in Appendix B under 1199; also Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, pp. 103-4.

⁵² *Early English Stages, Part I, Vol. i*, p. 166 and *Part II, Vol. ii*, pp. 32-37.

⁵³ *Early English Stages, Part II, Vol. ii*, p. 173.

⁵⁴ Practitioners who have based their theatrical activities on play and game theory include: Viola Spolin, *Improvisation for the Theatre* (Chicago: Northwestern University Press, 1963); interviews with performers of The Second City and Compass Players: Jeffery Sweet (Ed.), *Something Wonderful Right Away*; Clive Barker, *Theatre Games* (London: Methuen, 1977); Keith Johnstone, *Impro: Improvisation and the Theatre* (London: Methuen, 1978).

⁵⁵ The "community" I am referring to here may be as small as a woman's circle or a couple or even one person performing for herself as audience. It can be as large as those in the world who comprehend the many varieties of English language. The latter is the field which encompasses the community under consideration in this dissertation. A "community" is denoted by the fact that the people within it share

something in common. In some theatre experiences, this may be only time and space.

⁵⁶ Northrop Frye described Christianity as the great "devourer of myths," *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 34.

⁵⁷ In order to focus on the social and political in this linear narrative, I have found it necessary to generalize and reductively simplify my considerations of aesthetic practices. This is contrary to my stated intent, but differences and regional particulars are noted in Appendix B, when they were included in the source texts.

⁵⁸ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 2. This is supported in Appendix B by several entries, including Pope Gregory's orders to Augustine and his missionaries. They were not to destroy the temples or suppress symbolic practices. Instead, they were to retain these sacred properties and activities and change only the meaning and myth assigned to their symbolic form. Mitchell and Leys, p. 8; Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 125-27; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, pp. 95-96, 140-41; appearing in Appendix B under 597. See also Richard Southern, *The Seven Ages of Theatre*, p. 56.

⁵⁹ Barbara Walker writes:

A sense of beauty seems to inhere in human beings, however they may disagree on its specifics; and this sense often proves a major route to religious experience....Who has not experienced intense feelings about a sunset,...or a work of art?...Esthetic responses can be as overwhelming as intense sexual stimuli and probably bear a profound unconscious relationship to them (*The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, pp. 501-2).

⁶⁰ Chambers, *Mediaeval, Vol. I*, pp. 100-8; appears in Appendix B under **Iron Age: Keltic-Teutonic Customs**.

⁶¹ Robert Graves described the difficulties Frazer faced at Cambridge because he dared to publish "blasphemy" (pp. 241-42).

⁶² Graves, pp. 388-89. See also Starhawk, *The Spiral Dance: A Rebirth of the Ancient Religion of the Great Goddess*, rev. ed. (New York: Harper San Francisco, 1989), pp. 1-47. Included in this book is the text of the

creation myth, "The Wheel of the Year" (p. 43), an oral teaching in the Faery tradition. The elevation of the god over his goddess was mythologically achieved by a violent act such as rape.

⁶³ Graves, p. 389; appears in Appendix B under 1642. The various forms and attributes of the pagan goddesses and gods were assigned to the panoply of saints and the village festivals were then celebrated on holy-days or Saints' days as wake-days, fairs, church-ales and proved to be profitable as fundraisers for the Church. Strutt, pp. 468-71; Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, pp. 271-73; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, pp. 98-99 and *Vol. II*, p. 164; appears in Appendix B under 730.

⁶⁴ Mitchell and Leys, p. 430 and Conolly, pp. 27-28; appear in Appendix B under 1802 and 1804, respectively.

⁶⁵ Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, p. 128, and Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 144; appear in Appendix B under 671.

⁶⁶ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 98, footnote #2; appears in Appendix B under 601.

⁶⁷ Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 145 and Walker, *The Woman's Dictionary of Symbols and Sacred Objects*, p. 243; appear in Appendix B under 1222.

⁶⁸ Mitchell and Leys, p. 369; appears in Appendix B under 1603. The association between witches-priestesses and actor-performers raises questions about the historical role women were allowed to play in the theatre up to 1660 and their access to mainstream resources throughout recorded history.

⁶⁹ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, pp. 30, 46; appears in Appendix B under 597.

⁷⁰ McKechnie, pp. 5-10 and Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 183. Wickham wrote:

The medieval professional's passport to membership of a minstrel troupe...was his virtuosity as dancer, acrobat, musician, reciter of gestes, juggler or clown. So extraordinary was his skill in his chosen mode of entertaining, that it was common

to think of him in company with magicians
(*Volume One*, pp. 266-67).

⁷¹ Mitchell and Leys, p. 43; Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 56, 153-54 and *Early English Stages, Volume One*, pp. 16, 18, 181-82; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 37; appear in Appendix B under 1209.

⁷² McKechnie, pp. 9-11, 13 and Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, pp. 70-71; appear in Appendix B under 1066: **Norman Conquest**.

⁷³ McKechnie noted that for community rituals/revels there was "no marked difference in the taste of the various classes of audience...the noble in his castle and the peasant in his cottage." These festival traditions were incorporated into celebrations in which everyone participated with pleasure (p. 5).

⁷⁴ Strutt, p. 272; appears in Appendix B under 1224.

⁷⁵ Strutt, p. 252.

⁷⁶ Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 108-11 and *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 232; Mitchell and Leys, pp. 54-55; appear in Appendix B under 1210.

⁷⁷ "Pilgrimages," Mitchell and Leys, pp. 108, 110; appears in Appendix B under 730; also *Lenten Agon*, Hardison, pp. 87-177; appears in Appendix B under 812. I also consider the Crusades beginning in 1096 as a form of enactment of Christian principles.

⁷⁸ The official decree was made in 1311; however, observance of the holiday was not universal until 1318. See Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 60, 66, 68, 78, 83, 85 and *Early English Stages, Volume One*, pp. 121-22. Also Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, pp. 95-96.

⁷⁹ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 128; appears in Appendix B under 1110.

⁸⁰ Wickham recorded that it was Jonson who first used the word "drama" in 1616 (*Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 122), the year he was made Poet Laureate and awarded a pension (*Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 123).

⁸¹ The term "redaction" is frequently used by Wickham to describe the process of transforming a playscript into a text for publication. Most of the extant texts for religious cycle plays were not printed until late in the sixteenth or seventeenth century; hence they bear the cultural marks of ideological shifts. Wickham often warns us that we must keep this historical context in mind when we read medieval plays.

⁸² Wickham has marked the period 1576 to 1660 as "the war against the stage itself," an indication of the importance historians have placed on the move to shut down the theatre in an effort to end the kind of activities we conventionally associate with this institution (*Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 240).

⁸³ This patent, awarded in 1574, allowed them to perform in London on weekdays and holidays, which was contrary to the wishes of the City Fathers. The State government maintained that public showings of plays were required to ensure high standards of performance at Court. (Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. xii, 48, 78; *Part Two*, p. 159; appears in Appendix B under 1574.

⁸⁴ Until Henry VIII's break with the Church when the monasteries were officially closed in 1532, playtexts were subject to the jurisdiction of Catholic doctrine and plays (Cycles, Saints' plays and Moralities) were produced primarily as part of community celebrations on Church calendar holidays. The wealthier classes, however, also entertained themselves with "interludes" ("short plays") performed between revels on special occasions by companies of players retained as household servants. These playmaking events have been discursively categorized as "secular" activities for "social recreation," although revels were likely incorporated into many of the festival celebrations which had been long-standing traditions recoded by Romantic chivalry.

It is also interesting to note that, in *Early English Stages, Volume One*, Wickham takes pride in the amateur status of those who participated in the community plays for religious festivals, especially the Cycles; I suspect this reflects a personal bias toward amateur playmaking (Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 187; *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 15, and *Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 59, 62; appears in Appendix B under 1530, as well as 1532. "Interludes": Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 171-75, 189-90; *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 235; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, pp. 181-83; appears in Appendix B under 1389).

⁸⁵ The chronology marks a series of riots which have been recorded as a result of using the theatre as a vehicle for promoting the Protestant or Catholic cause. Public disturbances against the Church are first noted in the mid-fifteenth century (1443) when the "riding of the kyng at Christmas" in Norwich ended in civil disorder (Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. I, pp. 261-62). In 1514, Lollards destroyed a pageant at Bungay (Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. II, p. 111) and Strutt recorded Mayday riots in 1517 (p. 454). There were repeated attempts to control seditious behaviour which occurred under the guise of mumming and eventually mumming was suppressed as a public form of celebration (Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. I, p. 396; appears in Appendix B under 1511). Henry VIII also found it necessary to ban the traditional Midsummer Watch in 1539. The civic authorities in London eventually appropriated these popular summer celebrations and they came to be known as the Lord Mayor's Show (Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume Two, Part I, p. 46, note *; appears in Appendix B under 1535). The Boy Bishop celebrations also were subject to regulation by the sovereign (Strutt, pp. 448, 450; appears in Appendix B under 1542).

⁸⁶ Religious plays were suppressed in New Romney and Ipswich in 1518 (Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. II, p. 111; Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume Two, Part I, p. 61, note *) and city officials expressed concern over the content of the Chester cycle plays in 1529 (Wickham, *The Mediaeval Theatre*, p. 204). The "short play" or interlude form became a perfect polemical vehicle; Strutt records that they were "jocular, to promote mirth" and used "facetious or satirical dialogue" (p. 235; appears in Appendix B under 1528). Their topicality also made them a popular form of entertainment with the masses (Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume One, p. 240; Volume Two, Part I, pp. 67-69; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. II, pp. 222-23; appears in Appendix B under 1549). In 1533, Cranmer and Cromwell banned interludes of questionable content (Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume Two, Part I, p. 15) and in 1538, John Bale was commissioned to write anti-papal interludes, including *King John*, for the Cromwell players (Wickham, *The Mediaeval Theatre*, pp. 104, 205 and *Early English Stages*, Volume One, p. 116). The next year, a player was burned at the stake for performing in heretical plays (Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume One, p. 239; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. II, p. 221; appears in Appendix B under 1539 and 1540).

⁸⁷ In 1549, on the heels of the Kett rebellion, a Catholic uprising during a Protestant play (Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume Two, Part I, pp. 65-66), the Government legislated to suppress "plays" (Findlater, p. 17; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage*, Vol. II, p. 222; Wickham, *Early English Stages*, Volume Two, Part I, p. 67); i.e., polemical interludes, miracle Cycles,

Catholic Moralities under the *Act of Uniformity* (Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 240 and *Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 267-69; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, pp. 222-23); appear in Appendix B under 1550 and 1551.

To impose a uniform pattern of life and thought upon the country, administrations had to decide not only what was and was not suitable for subjects to hear uttered on stages, but when and where such utterances should be permitted and who might safely be allowed to utter them (Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 47).

⁸⁸ Puritans began pamphletting against the stage in earnest (Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 84; appears in Appendix B under 1574).

⁸⁹ Mitchell and Leys, p. 340; appears in Appendix B under 1595.

⁹⁰ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 225; appears in Appendix B under 1559.

⁹¹ Findlater, pp. 17-18; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 75; appear in Appendix B under 1559.

⁹² In 1545, Henry VIII instituted the Revels office and the position of Master of the Revels, who was to supervise court entertainments; the Master fell under the supervision of the Lord Chamberlain (Findlater, pp. 18, 20; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 404; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 283 and *Volume Two, Part I*, p. 52).

⁹³ Findlater, pp. 18, 21; Wiles, p. 14. Findlater points out that initially censorship was only considered a safeguard for seditious content in plays and not a way of regulating the "moral tone" of the drama.

⁹⁴ The chronology records that in 1958, Joan Littlewood's Theatre Workshop was charged with performing unlicensed — improvised — material and in 1962, the American improvisation troupe, The Premise, a forerunner to Second City, was ordered to stop performing when on tour in London (Findlater, pp. 151-52).

⁹⁶ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Theatre, Vol. I*, p. 51; appears in Appendix B under 1400.

⁹⁶ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 187; appears in Appendix B under 1494; also Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 173 and *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 116; appears in Appendix B under 1484.

⁹⁷ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 47-48; appears in Appendix B under 1418.

⁹⁸ Mitchell and Leys, p. 298; appears in Appendix B under 1531 and 1572. Wickham pointed out that by this legislation, acting became "something other than an Englishman's right" — the official professionalization of a once amateur pastime (*Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 80). See also Chambers, *The Medieval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 55 and McKechnie, p. 24.

⁹⁹ It is interesting to note that the Puritan leaders did not condemn all performance activities; their target was the stage plays which were becoming more exclusive. Bartholomew Fair continued to offer popular entertainments after the official closure of the theatres. As well, Oliver Cromwell kept two buffoons for his personal pleasure (McKechnie, pp. 33-34; appears in Appendix B under 1642). Upon his father's death, Henry Cromwell made a speech in Parliament in which he visualized his father as the popular hero in a puppet play (Speaight, p. 71; appears in Appendix B under 1659).

¹⁰⁰ Recorded incidents of payments to actors for the service of not performing. In Canterbury: 1625; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 146. In Bristol, 1631 and 1634; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 146. In Worcester: 1634; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 146. In Exeter and Southampton: 1635; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 146.

¹⁰¹ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One*, p. 274; appears in Appendix B under 1327.

¹⁰² Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 77-78; appears in Appendix B under 1564 (Italics mine).

¹⁰³ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 81-82, 195-96.

¹⁰⁴ Mitchell and Leys, p. 298 (Italics mine); see also Hattaway, p. 44; Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 221.

¹⁰⁵ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 86-87.

¹⁰⁶ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 85-87, 191; Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, pp. 23-24; appears in Appendix B under 1582, 1584 and 1601.

¹⁰⁷ Hattaway, p. 43.

¹⁰⁸ An exception was made after the Privy Council ordered that all London playhouses be suppressed in response to the performance at The Swan by Lord Pembroke's Men of Thomas Nashe's and Ben Johnson's *Isle of Dogs*. Theatres were closed for a three-month period only (Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, pp. 11-14); appears in Appendix B under 1597.

¹⁰⁹ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, pp. 49, 141-42; Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 113.

¹¹⁰ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, p. 24; appears in Appendix B under 1603.

¹¹¹ Findlater, p. 27, Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 25 and *Volume One*, p. 90; appears in Appendix B under 1603.

¹¹² Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 93; appears in Appendix B under 1603.

¹¹³ In 1967, Findlater wrote:

The drama in the next few years moved more rapidly towards its isolation from the national life as a privileged royal appendage, satisfying Court taste and avoiding Court taboos, under the erratic tutelage of the Lord Chamberlain and his agent, the Master of Revels. These helped to kill the genuinely popular theatre of Shakespeare's day (p. 27).

¹¹⁴ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, p. 281.

¹¹⁵ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, pp. 78, 81-89.

- ¹¹⁶ Mitchell and Leys, p. 224.
- ¹¹⁷ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 26; appears in Appendix B under 1532.
- ¹¹⁸ Mitchell and Leys, pp. 348-350; appears in Appendix B under 1573.
- ¹¹⁹ Strutt, p. 235; footnote #86 above.
- ¹²⁰ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, pp. 169-71, 175.
- ¹²¹ The etymological associations between "ritual" as a transformative process and "recreation" as re-creating should be noted here.
- ¹²² Speaight, p. 70; appears in Appendix B under 1647.
- ¹²³ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 138.
- ¹²⁴ Davenant was the first to open Lincoln's Inn Fields, 1661, and Killigrew opened at the Theatre Royal, Bridges Street, in 1663; later the Theatre Royal was relocated to Drury Lane. Findlater, p. 30; appears in Appendix B under 1662. In 1674, Davenant moved to Dorset Garden Theatre (Mander and Mitchenson, p. 3 and Mitchell and Leys, p. 303); appears in Appendix B under 1674. Betterton reopened Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1690 (Mander and Mitchenson, p. 3). It was a claim to Davenant's royal patent that allowed John Rich, son of the lawyer Christopher Rich who had bought the patent from Davenant, to open Covent Garden in 1732 (Mander and Mitchenson, p. 9).
- Also Wickham recorded that, although the stagecraft changed, the familiar conventions for acting were retained (*Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 139).
- ¹²⁵ Eventually the aristocratic preferences shift in favour of directly imported products rather than English derivatives, especially Italian opera (Mander and Mitchenson, p. 4).
- ¹²⁶ Appears in Appendix B under 1660: Speaight, pp. 73, 79, 82 and Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 159; 1666: Speaight, p. 73; 1667: Speaight, pp. 75, 77-78 and McKechnie, p. 35; 1668: Speaight, p. 77 and McKechnie, p. 35; 1669: McKechnie, p. 74.

¹²⁷ Other venues, such as Vauxhall, Ranelagh and Sadler's Wells, offered vocal and instrumental concert entertainments with more decorum and class exclusivity (Strutt, pp. 382-83; appears in Appendix B under **1675**).

¹²⁸ This is the same process which has made the alternate theatre a viable entity in English Canada.

¹²⁹ Findlater, p. 31.

¹³⁰ Mander and Mitchenson, pp. 3-4.

¹³¹ Findlater, p. 33.

¹³² Findlater, p. 33; appears in Appendix B under **1698**.

¹³⁵ Orders were issued by Queen Anne to this effect (Findlater, p. 34); appears in Appendix B under **1703** and **1711**.

¹³⁴ Findlater, p. 34; appears in Appendix B under **1711**.

¹³⁵ Goodman's Fields in **1729** and Covent Garden in **1732** (Findlater, p. 39).

¹³⁶ Findlater, p. 39.

¹³⁷ Findlater, pp. 38-39; Mitchell and Leys, p. 440 and Booth, *The Revels History of Drama in English*, p. 43; appear in Appendix B under **1736** and **1737**.

¹³⁸ Findlater, p. 41.

¹³⁹ Conolly, p. 14.

¹⁴⁰ Conolly, pp. 15, 20-21; appears in Appendix B under **1738**.

¹⁴¹ Findlater, pp. 35, 41.

¹⁴² Conolly, pp. 13-14; Mitchell and Leys, p. 440; Findlater, p. 41.

¹⁴³ Conolly, p. 22.

¹⁴⁴ Mayer, p. 5; appears in Appendix B under **1737**.

- ¹⁴⁶ Mander and Mitchenson, pp. 9-10 and Mayer, p. 5.
- ¹⁴⁶ Donohue, pp. 32-33; appears in Appendix B under 1737.
- ¹⁴⁷ Donohue, pp. 40-42; appears in Appendix B under 1748.
- ¹⁴⁸ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 3; appears in Appendix B under 1750.
- ¹⁴⁹ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 30.
- ¹⁵⁰ Findlater, p. 47; Booth recorded the passing of a Theatre Act in 1752 as well which regulated "places of amusement," allowing local magistrates to issue licences to venues which did not attempt to present the spoken drama.
- ¹⁵¹ Booth, *The Revels History*, pp. 40-41; appears in Appendix B under 1752.
- ¹⁵² Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part II*, p. 154 (Italics mine).
- ¹⁵³ Because genre is associated with literary categories, I resist using the term in the context of performance. The subject of genre is also problematic in literary theory. See Jacques Derrida, "The Law of Genre," *Acts of Literature* (London: Routledge, 1992), pp. 221-252.
- ¹⁵⁴ Farce is often included in this list, but as a dramatic genre is problematic because conventionally it incorporates as much direct writing on stage as it does on paper.
- ¹⁵⁵ See above Section 1.7.
- ¹⁵⁶ The chronology records several instances of commentary by Addison in *The Spectator* under 1708 (Strutt, p. 474); other examples of commentary from this paper under 1711 (Strutt, pp. 37-40, 248-49, 473-74) and under 1712 (Strutt, p. 460) and from *The Tatler* under 1709 (Strutt, p. 296). Also there is a notation under 1702 that Addison and Steele were both friends of John Weaver (Broadbent, p. 157); John Weaver also contributed to the "economy of discourse" by publishing his *History of Mimes and Pantomimes* in 1728 (Broadbent, pp. 138-39).
- ¹⁵⁷ Strutt, pp. 37-40.

¹⁵⁸ It must be noted here that this may be Strutt's interpretation of a descriptive passage. The point, however, is valid whether it comes from the primary commentary (1711) or the secondary commentary (1799). As readers, we are directed by rhetoric to believe that the intent was "ridicule."

¹⁵⁹ Meisel, pp. 167-68.

¹⁶⁰ This question, which is worth pursuing, can only be answered by going back to the primary sources quoted in the historical commentaries; but this is outside the immediate scope of this research.

¹⁶¹ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 4; appears in Appendix B under 1815.

¹⁶² Donohue, p. 50, note #71; appears in Appendix B under 1802. By 1818, the Olympic was offering what amounted to full dialogue plays with harpsichord phrases after a few exchanges (Donohue, p. 44 and Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 42).

¹⁶³ The chronology marks the use of the word "clown" in 1577 with reference to Richard Tarlton (Wiles, pp. 62, 64-70) up to 1630 when "clown" was banished from the aristocratic stage, making room for a Harlequin-type character (Speaight, p. 49). The accuracy of these dates is not at issue; rather, interest lies in the ideological and aesthetic shifts which occurred within this time frame that are represented by certain performance practices, such as clowning.

¹⁶⁴ Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, p. 5.

¹⁶⁵ Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, pp. 5-6 and Meisel, p. 61.

¹⁶⁶ Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, p. 6 and Meisel, pp. 62-64.

¹⁶⁷ Quoted in Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 23.

¹⁶⁸ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 42.

¹⁶⁹ Covent Garden underwent expansion in 1792 and Drury Lane in 1812, three years after the Old Price Riots forced them to lower ticket prices (Booth, *The Revels History*, pp. 7-11, 46). By 1820, there was a general lowering of all prices at London theatres (Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 10).

¹⁷⁰ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 10. This strategy was not completely new. As we have seen, pantomime and variety forms had been a part of the bill with the literary drama since the time of Davenant.

¹⁷¹ Donohue maintains that this was the reason melodrama "developed" further in the patent theatres. This assessment seems to be dependent upon a literary point of view, rather than theatrical (Donohue, p. 50, note #71); appears in Appendix B under 1802.

¹⁷² Booth, *The Revels History*, pp. 10-11.

¹⁷³ Quoted in Conolly, p. 174.

¹⁷⁴ This is a reworking of the thesis presented by J.M.S. Careless in *Frontier and Metropolis: Regions, Cities, and Identities in Canada before 1914* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1989).

¹⁷⁵ Stephenson, p. 9 and Conolly, p. 180.

¹⁷⁶ Booth, *The Revels History*, pp. 43-44.

¹⁷⁷ Findlater, pp. 60-62, 64; see also Stephenson, pp. 9-10; appear in Appendix B under 1843.

¹⁷⁸ Mander and Mitchenson, p. 24; McKechnie, pp. 136, 139; appear in Appendix B under 1843.

¹⁷⁹ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 13; appears in Appendix B under 1844.

¹⁸⁰ McKechnie, pp. 139-40; appears in Appendix B under 1843.

¹⁸¹ The word "frontier" should be a clue to the reader that I am responding intertextually to Careless' text *Frontier and Metropolis*. I find no reason to suggest that he is wrong in his thesis that colonists carried "London" and the hegemonic cultural ideals which were assigned to (urban and urbane) "culture" to Canada (pp. 10-31). Perhaps this seems like a broad generalization, but we are dealing with dominant value systems that were reinforced in the media of the day and therefore used rhetorical means to persuade and influence. Dominant narratives order thinking and carry the power to unify and universalize as well as generalize. This is the underlying principle upon which our system of education has been built. For further reference, see Susan E. Houston and Alison Prentice, *Schooling and*

Scholars in Nineteenth-Century Ontario (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1988).

¹⁸² Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (Eds.), *Rethinking Popular Culture: Contemporary Perspectives in Cultural Studies* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1991), pp. 374-97.

¹⁸³ Mukerji and Schudson, p. 374.

¹⁸⁴ Hector Charlesworth, *Candid Chronicles and More Candid Chronicles*. These chronicles are about Canada (Toronto) in the late nineteenth century. Charlesworth did not apologize for his preferences. He found much to be admired in the vaudeville and variety theatre of his day, as well as the star system and commercial touring. Rather, it was the pretentiousness of "intellectualism" that provoked him. In the second volume, he referred disparagingly to the literary invasion of the theatre by novelist-playwrights who considered their texts sacred and did not know how to produce a good show (pp. 335-37).

¹⁸⁵ Murray Edwards quoted from Handscomb's criticism in *A Stage in Our Past*, p. 67.

¹⁸⁶ Maria Tippett, *Making Culture: English-Canadian Institutions and the Arts before the Massey Commission* (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990). Page numbers cited in parentheses in the text.

¹⁸⁷ Tippett's quotation is taken from the preface to Matthew Arnold's "Culture and Anarchy: An Essay in Social and Political Criticism" (1869) in *Culture and Anarchy and Friendship's Garland* (London: Macmillan, 1894), p. xi. This familiar quotation is a fundamental tenet in Arnold's cultural theory and the elitism and social-political implications should be noted. The title of Arnold's essay indicates that the relationship between "culture" and a "social and political" agenda was overt.

¹⁸⁸ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 48; appears in Appendix B under 1418.

¹⁸⁹ Mitchell and Leys, p. 532; appears in Appendix B under 1782.

¹⁹⁰ Mitchell and Leys, p. 533; appears in Appendix B under 1798.

¹⁹¹ Mitchell and Leys, pp. 533-34. This move actually hindered the advancement of other education plans which aimed to deliver a wider

program. It was another fifty years before The Education Act offering education to all children between the ages of five and thirteen was implemented (Mitchell and Leys, p. 534).

¹⁹² Mitchell and Leys, p. 426 (observations on a community of cotton workers in Derbyshire); appears in Appendix B under 1796.

¹⁹³ For thirty years beginning in 1809, *George Barnwell* was presented before the Boxing Day pantomime at Covent Garden as "a great moral lesson' to the apprentices of London....*Jane Shore* has supplanted *Barnwell* and the anxieties of the age, are, it would appear, now directed towards the softer sex." Quoted in Broadbent, p. 219; appears in Appendix B under 1809.

¹⁹⁴ "Realization" implied that something was made more real by adding another dimension such as adding the third dimension of live performance to two-dimensional paintings (Meisel, pp. 29-33); appears in Appendix B under 1789.

¹⁹⁵ The first recorded "realization" appears in Appendix B under 1733; at Drury Lane, Hogarth's *Harlot's Progress* was presented in mimed action and songs as a realization of his recently published engravings.

The reader is reminded of the social-political context for this narrative in which I assume that aesthetic choices are influenced by social and political determinants. I am not attempting to rewrite history here nor to suggest that "problem plays" could/should have been aesthetically possible in the early nineteenth century.

¹⁹⁶ In 1832, Jerrold's *The Rent Day* realized the paintings by David Wilkie, "Distraint for Rent" and "The Rent Day" (Booth, *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, p. 10 and Meisel, pp. 95, 145, 148-49, 157).

¹⁹⁷ Meisel, pp. 115-16.

¹⁹⁸ Meisel, pp. 29-33; appears in Appendix B under 1789. In 1837, Dickens' *The Pickwick Club* was presented at the City of London theatre. The series of tableaux which constituted this staged drama were theatrical adaptations of the published illustrations from the serialized novel (Meisel, pp. 251-52). With the translation and publication in 1834 of Lessing's *Laocoön; or the Limits of Poetry and Painting*, theatre practitioners found justification for realizing in tableau the moral message as the ideal moment to enact on stage (Meisel, pp. 17-20, 27-28).

- ¹⁹⁶ Booth, *The Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, p. 30.
- ²⁰⁰ Booth, *The Victorian Spectacular Theatre*, pp. 45, 48, 50, 53.
- ²⁰¹ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 14; appears in Appendix B under **1850**.
- ²⁰² Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 16-17.
- ²⁰³ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 21.
- ²⁰⁴ Findlater, p. 193; appears in Appendix B under **1843**.
- ²⁰⁵ Findlater, pp. 209-10; appears in Appendix B under **1866**.
- ²⁰⁶ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 14; appears in Appendix B under **1850**.
- ²⁰⁷ Richard Hengist Horne, quoted in Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 32; appears in Appendix B under **1844**.
- ²⁰⁸ Richard Hengist Horne, quoted in Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 32; appears in Appendix B under **1844**.
- ²⁰⁹ Booth, *The Revels History*, p. 20; appears in Appendix B under **1868**.
- ²¹⁰ McKechnie, p. 131; appears in Appendix B under **1880**.
- ²¹¹ Words such as "barbarians" are verbal codes found throughout Arnold's essay, "Culture and Anarchy."
- ²¹² See Bernard Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation*, p. 1. "Presentation" is closer to the idea of "show." Also, Jacques Derrida, "Sending: On Representation," *Social Research*, 49(1), (Spring 1982), pp. 294-326 (Trans. Peter and Mary Ann Caws).
- ²¹³ The reader should be aware that this was not an overnight aesthetic change but rather a long-term cultural project with roots in the adoption of certain aesthetic rules by **alternate** practitioners such as Jonson and Dryden.
- ²¹⁴ Refer to Section 1.6. For words which are indicative of or which relate to "theatricality," refer to "keyword" list.

²¹⁵ This "mimesis" is linked to the Aristotelian (literary) premise that words can tell the truth if they "imitate reality." It is a short hop in transferring this assumption to theatre which, through iconic signs, seems to say "this is" and seems to capture Reality on stage (Sol Worth, "Pictures Can't Say Ain't" in *Studying Visual Communication*, pp. 162-84).

²¹⁶ Refer to Section 1.6 above.

²¹⁷ Booth, "Spectacle as Production Style," p. 14.

²¹⁸ Meisel, pp. 148-49.

²¹⁹ Meisel, pp. 355-56; appears in Appendix B under **1840**.

²²⁰ Meisel, pp. 355-56; appears in Appendix B under **1840**.

²²¹ See "Spectacle as Production Style" and *Victorian Spectacular Theatre*.

²²² These are familiar and preferred aesthetic values coded in the rhetorical terminology of Matthew Arnold's cultural theory, reinforced even today by mainstream criticism.

²²³ Booth, "Spectacle as Production Style," p. 14.

²²⁴ Booth, "Spectacle as Production Style," p. 10.

²²⁵ Booth, "Spectacle as Production Style," p. 19; appears in Appendix B under **1892** (*Italics mine*).

²²⁶ Entries which refer to "art" within Time Zone Four are found under **1878** with reference to Irving ("Temple of Art") and associated to the binary "aesthete/philistine"; under **1885** with reference to Irving's production of *Faust*: "Art as well as Drama" and with reference to Godwin's production of *As You Like It* which was reviewed in the *Art Journal*: an allusion to "histrionic art"; under **1882** with reference to Dion Boucicault's published text *The Art of Acting*; under **1912** with reference to the opposition to the censorship of drama: "art of the drama"; also **1909** with reference to theatre as a "mean, minor art."

²²⁷ The references before from primary sources associate theatre with fine art or "painting" rather than "art" in general.

²²⁸ The Joint Select Committee in 1909 focused "on Censorship" exclusively and testimony made reference to the interests of the "Englishmar of letters" who, under the censorship laws, is "confined to the trivial and puerile...relegating theatre to the position of a mean, minor art" (quoted in Findlater, p. 105). Readings such as this one indicate that the interests served by **the theatre** were dominated by writers who sought more control over the theatrical event.

²²⁹ Archer considered 1885 as the beginning of "the Renaissance of English Drama." This phrase was coined by Henry Arthur Jones (Stephens, pp. 138-39).

²³⁰ Both uses this term with reference to drama for a middle-class theatre in *The Revels History*, p. 28; appears in Appendix B under 1866 and 1880.

²³¹ I would suggest here that these two practitioners can coexist in one person but that **value** was placed on the former over the latter.

²³² Only Strutt's text falls outside this parameter; the differences in Strutt's narrative are interesting to trace.

CHAPTER 8

MARKING THE POPULAR:
THE MODEL AND CONVENTIONS

PERFORMANCE IV

8.0 Constructing a Model for the Popular Theatre Event

In Performance IV, using the information collected in the database Appendix B, I have developed a model for the popular theatre event (Figs. 5-8). In this construction, I would like to resist the notion of an **ideal type** which we have seen can limit our thinking about theatre practice. However, I have found that it is also necessary to construct a **theoretical** or **hypothetical paradigm** which can aid us in organizing, in visual and verbal patterns, elements of popular performances in the context of their social occasion.

What I have encountered from the outset in this research are various characteristics of theatre events which designate them as **popular**, while maintaining an association with a type of culture that, because of its multiplicity and variety, is marked as "chaotic." On the other hand, the **literary**, by virtue of its emphasis on unity, containment, legitimation, regulation and decorum, is marked as "orderly." The popular resists containment because it feeds upon interaction with the everyday.¹ It resists legitimation and regulation. While the literary assumes a law of natural **order** reflected in its assumptions about the **homogeneity** of its audience (community) and

about its aesthetic **product** as an objectified and unified art **work**, the popular responds to **chaos** and **heterogeneity** as well as the symbolizing and interpretive **processes** of a community made up of various individuals at **play**.

The literary theatre assumes that meaning is made by the playwright-author in word signs that are interpreted theatrically by the performers and design team. This meaning is **present** in the stage **realization** to be received by a **passive** audience. On the other hand, the popular assumes that the aesthetic symbolization during many and varied performance "turns" creates no meaning without the generative input of the audience members. Individuals take from popular theatrical presentations whatever meanings they want and need in the context of the occasion as well as in the context of their personal and social lives. It is acknowledged, however, that the performance team is able to direct and manipulate (influence to some degree) the meanings made from the event through the use of **stage** and **metatheatrical effects**.² At the same time, readings which resist or subvert these directed meanings are possible because the interpretive power is ultimately with the individual as full (creative) **participant** in the event. These are the elements of the popular theatre event which I have tried to incorporate into my model.

In deciding upon the visual pattern of the popular event, I began with an imaginary aerial view of a county fair which is my prototype for Bartholomew Fair, as described by McKechnie in *Popular Entertainments*

*through the Ages.*³ To stabilize the pattern of the fairground, I chose a second structure to provide a **bisociative** relationship with the fairground (as well as Canadian content!): a hockey rink. Once I settled on the design and arrangement of the basic elements, I measured the suitability of this arrangement by plotting the descriptive pattern of the British Music Hall event, which McKechnie also includes in detail.⁴

The model is a composite of four groups of elements which I have isolated in Figures 5-8. The **metatheatrical factors** (Fig. 5) are those elements which contextualize the dramatic performances as an occasion of popular theatre. They begin with the designations of the types of sites along the right-angled corners which indicate that the event is separated from everyday reality; I have shown on the diagram how the everyday is allowed to interplay with the event by keeping the enclosing sides of the frame **open to the outside**. The area between the outside limits and the hatchmarks of the oval, which indicate the transition to the performance event, is a zone of **liminality** which is **in-between** the outside everyday world and the fictive world of the staged **shows** which comprise the **performance event**. In this liminal zone, the participant engages in various activities which facilitate a playful shift in perception and mood from the real world to the fictive or pretend world. These activities include parades and publicity displays, buying tickets, programs, souvenirs, or food and drink. The chronology also marks games of chance and pleasure, including prostitution, which were available to the audience participant who was

entering or exiting the event, or who was in between shows. As well, the chronology marks particular ways of announcing performances such as the pipe and tabor parade historically associated with puppet shows, which have been grouped inside rectangles in this liminal area. Central to the event is the **audience-participant** around whom the aesthetic symbolization revolves. The smaller circles stand for other audience-participants (solid colour) and members of the staff (red outline) who can also double as performers. Within the performance event, performers can also function as staff members such as ushers or foodsellers; performers can be considered "stars" or "clowns," or have an organizational function such as "chairman" or "ringmaster."⁶

The performances are clustered in balloon-like circles around the audience-participant, who is integral to the popular event. Within each circle, various popular theatre activities are listed according to fifteen (15) categories. Each category (e.g., "skills of dexterity," "puppets," "light shows") is a descriptive index of the performance practice which aesthetically motivates the group of acts or shows. These categories continue to be challenged whenever I encounter a different popular performance activity. Again, I invite readers to add, question, delete or rearrange according to their own experience. When I found that a popular theatre activity qualified for more than one category, then I made a choice and listed it under the heading which I thought best described the dominant aesthetic game rule. This

typology (Fig. 6) is not intended to be definitive. Yet, it grants some degree of order to a multifarious body of theatrical practices.

The third element of popular theatre events which I have identified in my model is **aesthetic factors** (Fig. 7). These factors are qualities which are made manifest in **stage effects** that influence **perception** and **decoding** of the dramatic activity. In the context of communication theory, "stage effects" are comparable to "rhetoric" and refer to the manipulation of stage vocabularies in order to organize (persuasively) the audience's experience of the event, that is, to influence sensory perception and response in terms of emotion and desire as well as intellect. As aesthetic ideas, stage effects are stored in the theatrical imaginary as a category of codes and conventions. I think it is possible to think of the use of stage effects as part of "theatrical dramaturgy." These qualities are factors which we usually associate with **entertainment** value in popular theatre. It is possible to argue that these effects are present in the literary theatre as well, but, as I will show below in Performance V, it is conventional to deny both theatricality and stage effects in the literary tradition in **the theatre**.

The final aspect of the popular theatre event which is often the most difficult to identify because of our conventional thinking is **the drama** (Fig. 8). In nonliterary theatrical activities such as trapeze acts, rodeo and magic tricks and clown turns, the drama can be recognized by identifying the pivotal aspect of **tension** which accompanies the pretence (as if) of an actor in role, as a character within a fictive situation.

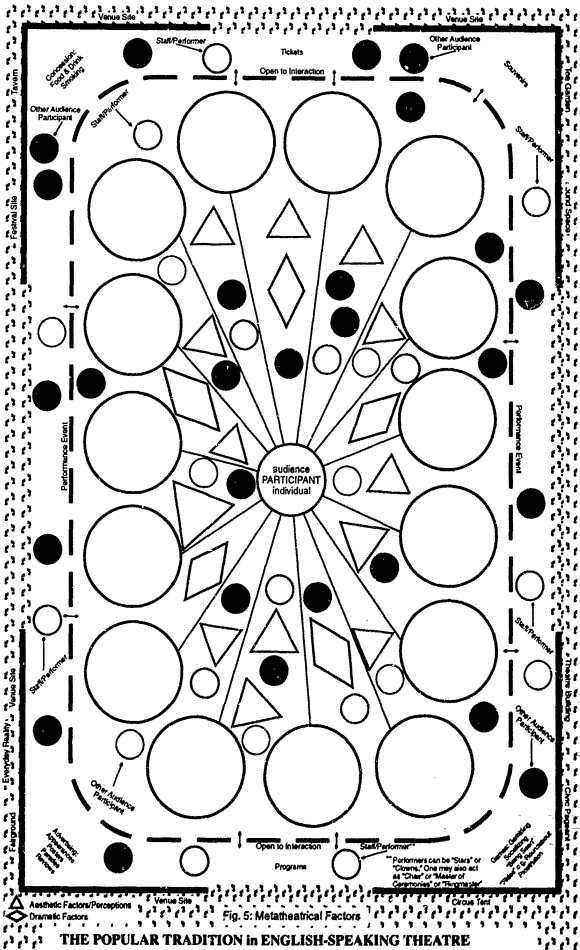


Fig. 5: Metatheatrical Factors

THE POPULAR TRADITION in ENGLISH-SPEAKING THEATRE

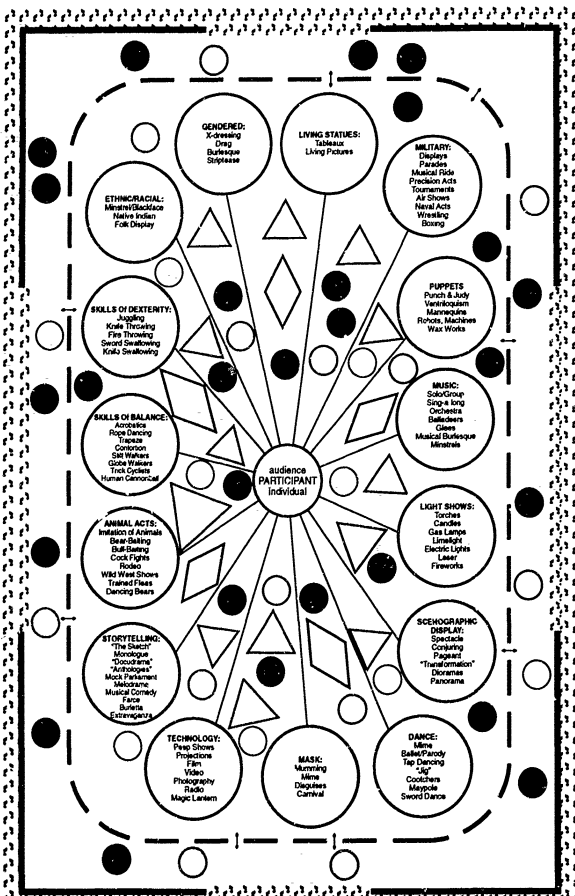
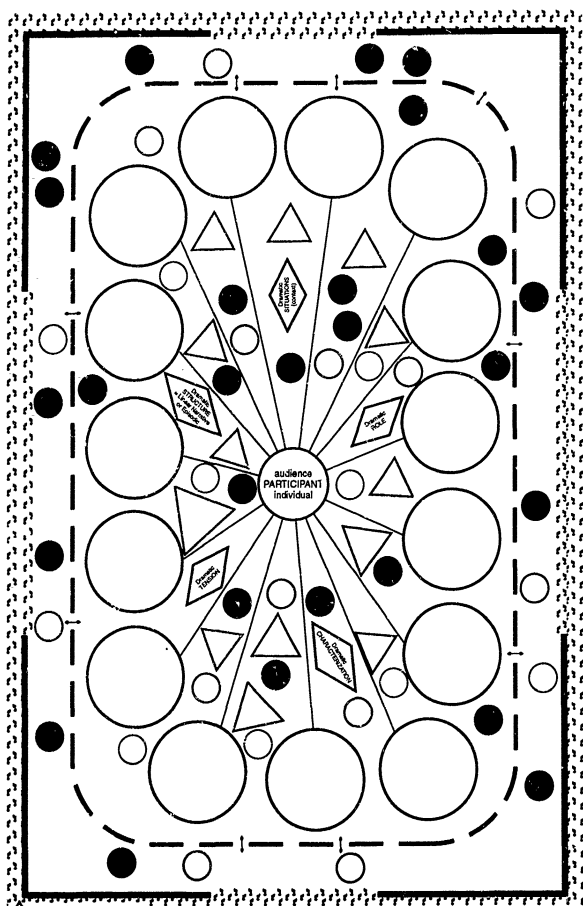


Fig. 6: Typology

THE POPULAR TRADITION in ENGLISH-SPEAKING THEATRE



▲ Aesthetic Factors/Perceptions

Fig. 8: Dramatic Factors

THE POPULAR TRADITION in ENGLISH-SPEAKING THEATRE

PERFORMANCE V

8.1 Marking the Literary and the Popular Conventions: A Comparison (Fig. 9)

In Performance V, I have marked in chart form (Fig. 9) the aesthetic conventions of the two theatrical traditions using the chronology, Appendix B, as my data source. As I indicated in Performance III, I originally intended to let this comparison be the focus of my consideration for "Time Zone Two: Bill Shakespeare/Ben Jonson." However, I deferred this strategy so that I could focus on the social and political response. After writing the narrative for Performance III, I found that it was possible to trace **general patterns** in aesthetic shifts over all four zones. Although these generalizations could be seen as reductive, they were also informative in terms of the relationship between literary and popular theatre practices and how we talk about these practices. These aesthetic shifts do not necessarily represent a movement forward or **progress**. Rather, I would suggest that the obvious move is toward an investment (that is, assigning value) in the idea of **rationalization**. This process of cultural valorization or privilege is made manifest in what is commonly referred to as **the mind-body split**. This split occurs when the powers of the **intellect** are strategically separated from the **intuition** and **emotions**, and the **rational** as well as the **material** are valued over **desire** and the **spirit**.⁶ Whether this separation can actually occur in real life is not at issue; the point is, if we are

"educated" and "enlightened," we are to **perform** in life as if we are able to separate our minds from our bodies.

Performance III reinforced my assertion that aesthetic practices are symbolized social and political ideologies that seek to maintain order according to certain value systems. Theatre and all cultural activities which we consider "art" cannot be viewed as benign and neutral objects; they influence the way we think about ourselves and our place in the universe by actively engaging our mind, bodies and spirit in very specific ways.

In the conventional construction of English-speaking theatre history, I found that shifts in aesthetics are marked by a consistent tendency to present the popular conventions as belonging to an **other** theatre. Literary conventions are reinforced and valued because the social hegemony has made a cultural (and political) investment in the **possibility** that English-speaking people are able to **reveal truth** (literal and unambiguous Truth) through word signs. This belief is engrained in our systems of knowledge and practice as a **fundamental principle** or **law**. To cite an example from those texts used in Appendix B, the chronology, Hardison considers Catholic rituals (the Mass and Lenten Agon) as theatrical "representations"; this implies that his thinking has undergone an epistemological collapse. The transformational process of theatrical **becoming** is rhetorically presented to us as the static product of **being** so that we are able to think of the enactment in terms of revealing the universa' and unchanging Truth of the

presence of the Christian God. These rituals are articulated as if they were literary art objects (enacted "dramas"). The articulation of the performed enactment is authenticated by emphasizing the relationship between the historical context and the performance, as well as by the divine Truth of the Word of God, that is, the text. The authority of the text is reinforced by the stability of the Latin language.

In the Bill/Ben time zone, the keyword is "verisimilitude" prescribed by Aristotle and aesthetically conventionalized in principles called the "Unities." These Unities were extracted from Aristotle's *Poetics* hermeneutically and therefore are coded, ideological interpretations of Aristotle's text. These Unities are valued because those who championed them as aesthetic rules maintained that these principles offer the semblance of an **ordered Reality**. In *Shakespeare's Clown*, Wiles points out that Ben Jonson's system of "humours" effectively bridged the popular convention of presenting characters as allegorical emblems of social types and the psychological representation of real-life individuals with personal motivations behind their behaviour.⁷

In the third time zone, we find that the theatrical territory for the literary theatre is claimed and legitimated in a process which I call **naming** (i.e., giving material **presence** through coding "this is/is not" and through classification and categorization). Legitimation of certain theatre practices was achieved by separating theatrical performances into **genres** such as

tragedy and comedy or pantomime and puppet theatre, and ascribing appropriate venues for **playing** certain theatre games. Addison's designation of some popular performances as **folk customs** also implied a rationalization rooted in historical authenticity but which is translated into hierarchical social and political evaluation.

"Naming" also implies the formulation of aesthetic rules in conjunction with the articulation of social codes. Political control over who gets to say what "is and is not" (or "will be" and "will not be") in the mass media of theatre, and control over the physical and visual aspects of theatrical performance, which can only present "this is" because of the iconicity of the sign, was achieved through legislated censorship. The chronology marks the shifts and struggles as the aristocracy and middle class wrestle for control over the theatre for the purpose of articulating and promoting their respective social values and interests. These interests were underwritten in the laws governing social order and hence were extended to governing the occasion for theatre. They were subsequently coded in the aesthetics of theatre games for the purpose of unification of social behaviour. Handbooks proliferated in the eighteenth century, illustrating **attitudes** (that is, poses emblematic of certain social attitudes) which showed and described approved deportment as well as mind-set. These poses were normalized as well as subverted in performance elements such as the poses of Harlequin in pantomime.⁸ Also it is well documented by historians of eighteenth- and

nineteenth-century theatre research that the tableau was useful as an **idealized** representation of social relationships and decorum.

In the final time zone, I considered the coding of the cultural dichotomy, "high" and "popular" in aesthetic practices. Here, "authenticity" becomes the keyword which reinforces the codes that associate the "literal" with "truth" and "reality." "Imagination" is valued but only when it aids in symbolically **revealing** the "universal" order in nature in much the same way as Truth is revealed in the Word. In terms of theatre aesthetics, stage "pictorialization" (rather than "theatrical" physicality or "spectacle") becomes a "realization" of what is "natural" as well as "real." Stage images were visual aids to lead the audience-community to a pre-determined (social and political) interpretation. After 1850, interpretation became the domain of learned authorities; archaeologists, historians and especially authors (playwrights and critics) sought to become, in Northrop Frye's words, a "symposium or elite group,"⁹ a different aristocracy. Once we recognize the coded vocabulary, inscribed by Matthew Arnold and circulated within the economy of discourse, that values an idea of "art" separate from ("popular") "culture," then we must finally acknowledge the collapse of cultural and social theory into a prescribed system of aesthetics which is clearly political.¹⁰ "The appetite for truth and fact"¹¹ augmented the presentation (showing) of an hierarchical social order which was offered in terms of stage effects **as if** some signs and codes were natural, universal (objective) and

true instead of semiotic, imaginative (subjective) and fictive. Importantly, too, the heterogeneity of **the theatre** audience (community) was **represented** as homogeneous — of one mind (coded as accessed through the word), of one body (coded as male), and of one spirit (coded as inspired by the one true Christian God, the Father).

In the following comparison, I have included in footnotes the source references where they were relevant to specific phrasing. As well, I have noted significant **intertextual** references to sources outside the chronology's bibliography.

Figure 9: Marking the Popular — Comparison of Conventions

	POPULAR	LITERARY
"SUCCESS"	marked by: popularity with audiences; measured by: commercial returns; profits	marked by: critical acclaim; "the best" ¹² measured by: aesthetic standards valued by the hegemony
	***	***
AUTHORSHIP	"collective" "collaboration": multiple perspective open to interpretation "anonymous": no authority only social context and function "success" attributed to performance to actors ¹³ "deviser" "artificer" religious plays controlled by the "Ordinary" function: director stage manager censor coded as "theatrical"	writer in word signs: "author" single point of view "closed" interpretation <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • authority on meanings presented • script: pre-text for performance determines interpretation • "givens" in text; to be staged • use of media redundancy¹⁴ - to communicate author's intent hero: author's point of view supporting cast: subordinate views implies coherence & control over the ephemeral ¹⁵ coded as "dramatic" instead of "theatrical"
	***	***
AUDIENCE-STAGE RELATIONSHIP	• sense of community between actors/audience and occasion / play-venue "game": audience involved in active playing ¹⁶ religious & secular plays: "divine & profane ludi" ¹⁷ text: "play-book" or "game-book" ¹⁸ "congregation": participants, respond in role respond as chorus	• passive audience: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - separation between stage and auditorium - architecture: orchestra, proscenium, curtain - fixed seating social context or occasion becomes ambiguous "society": assembly of autonomous individuals ¹⁸ social function of roles such as clowns; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - are absorbed into the play - become another character subordinate to hero - no longer laughs at authority (subversion)²⁰

- audience measures theatrical experience in relation to everyday experience performed, enacted, "lived through" mix of the familiar and the novel²¹ whole-sensory, chaotic, variety, unexpected, fragmented, "like life"²² appeals to the intuitive + rational affects the body + mind + spirit
- audience denied a sense of security about "reality" and "normalcy"
 - no clearcut point of view: ambiguity
 contrary messages: songs counter messages actions counter words multiple perspectives; simultaneous good/bad, right/wrong binaries not clear moral, ethical behaviour open to interpretation
- "direct address": actor --> audience deliberate and direct communication of ideas "rhetorical" soliloquy, asides, rhetorical questions improvised exchanges; exchanged quips topical references²⁴ and local references
- anything can happen social laws not easily enforced: chaos promotes individual response: personal "truth" -
 - empowers personal reading in social context
 individual construction of event
 - subjective experience
 dramatic activities (units) become integrated into the total event as a social event
 - social "ritual": community at play
- measured according to aesthetic criteria, including psychological plausibility & probability measured against cognitive "reality"²³:
 - "truth"
 - logical and ordered
 - identified and named
 "real" time & historical space represented
- sense of security about what is normal/real
 - readily perceived meanings
 intellectual "rationalization":
 - mind separated from emotions & spirit
 - "mind-body" split
- fourth wall convention; separate stage reality actor does not acknowledge audience
- ordered decorum maintained "civilized" behaviour preferred readings critical judgement: disinterested, distanced objectified, rationalized

DRAMATIC STORY

ALLEGORICAL²⁵

says one thing and means another

Forms²⁶: analogy, parable, gospels, proverbs
tales, cliché, quotations, aphorisms, slogans
characters in situations; lessons, sermons;
dreams

familiar to audience: shared meanings

knowledge of codes

symbolic: more than one level of meaning

- particular and general

commentary: historical, social, religious,

political

institutionalized interpretative method for Christian
rites

able to present unseen worlds: the cosmos

exists in abstraction; counters literal meaning;

exists in the world of naming phenomenon²⁷

Pattern of form:

over time: progress, processional, journey

conducive to pageant and parade

in space: agon/battle - tension, dichotomy

between levels of meaning

between symbolic images

conducive to dramatic enactment

dramatic metaphor; "dramatic mode"²⁸

Coded: multiple meanings (ambiguity)²⁹

topical, cosmological/abstract, personal codes

- enigmatic: obscurity vs. familiarity of codes

overcoded: spectacle, hyperbole, sensuous,

whole sensory, visual delight, pomp, pretty,

ornamental, playful, nonrational, thrilling

"schema": codes + association to be "read"

emblematic, visually detailed

self-conscious construction

used to avoid censorship, didactic

entertaining presentation

theatrical effects

LITERAL

what is told is unique, complex, developed
is to be interpreted literally

"authorized" meanings for enactment

"says" what it means

well-made play (see STRUCTURE)

sequence of events connected and continuous

sense of universality: "normal" "reality"

dramatic situation gives rise to actions

author's view: ethical, moral, political

represented by "hero"

following the "plot"

according to "theme"

"agon": between protagonist and antagonist

monologue, dialogue of prime importance

story unfolds in "talk":

"debate" "description" "explanation"

logical development: cause and effect

smooth transitions: narrator

scene changes

temporal indicators

plot kept to the foreground

distaste for allegory: "disguising" "didactic"

"irregular" "overly spiritual" "naive" "mystical"

"primitive aesthetic"

"disjunction of the creative (imaginative,

synthetic) and the interpretive (empirical and

analytic) mind"³⁰

"protean": indicates theatrical transformation
theatrical "as if"
- interplay between presence (literal meaning)
and absence (hidden meaning)

takes place in timeless present
or unlocalized space

primarily visual orientation "showing"³⁰

allegorical intent³¹: marked by...

- ritualized rhythm, repetition, formality
- ceremony, pattern attention to detail
- visual language - paradigm, figura, types
- schema, image, analogy
- arranged as correspondences:
doubling, polarities, opposites,
binary relationships, doppelgangers,
divided selves
- demons, magic, mystery, chance, miracles
fate rather than tragic flaw
- imitative magic: contagion, proximity³²
- figuration, personification, emblem
- fantasy, spectacle, wonder

social purpose: moral dualism - about authority
social order, value systems

not necessarily reinforces status quo
- offers multiple perspective

confronts perfection and depravity
"enlightenment" "edification"³³

- offers: social analysis - critical, subversive
shows social ordering systems
means of charting social conduct: "moralities"
for the individual: strategies and postures,
attitudes for dealing with social situations

takes place in specific time and space (place)
- provides continuity, named, recognizable
takes place over changing time: linear, rational
past, present, future

DRAMATIC STRUCTURE

Episodic ("emblems" in series)³⁵;

juxtaposition

montage³⁶: "fractured linearity"

- experienced like everyday life
- multiplicity, disorder, chaos, fragmentation³⁷
- can be seen as tableaux: simultaneous in juxtaposition³⁸
- no single point of cathartic release
- "transformational [theatrical] logic" rather than "transitional"³⁹

ritual time and space: "neutral" "ceremonial"

- new moments governed by idea rather than by linear time or specific place⁴⁰
time: season, repetition, unchanging, folding back on itself
space: fluid, multitudinous, enacted, abstract
- here & now; eternal present: "ritual time"⁴¹
cyclic time, universal time: cosmological

gestic moments in simultaneity; series

"dramatic images"⁴²

"character in situation"⁴³

Catholic Mass presented in "episodes"

Melodrama: nonlinear moments; images

"unfolding" in space ("pictures")⁴⁴

caricature/types in social moments

- without duration
- without motivation other than "showing"
action displayed: social context indicated

"loose structure"⁴⁵: "turns"

- variety, exotic, peculiar, particular
- jigs, songs, dialogue, action, skills
- emphasis on physical "showing"
- focus and unity irrelevant
- logic stretched
- continuity irrelevant
- patterns emerge which create meaning

Unified, contained

clear beginning, middle and end; transitions ordered and rationalized time-space

continuity - consistent character identities
one role, one actor

plot: connected, continuous
unified by theme

narrative: linear time

historical past, present, future
clear sequence of events, unity

reinforced visually and aurally

- internal progression: "develops" "unfolds" "logical"⁴⁶

one scene contingent upon another

space serves time (forward progress)⁴⁷

contained singular perspective
irrevocable change

use of space:

trompe d'oeil in scene painting
architectural perspective

framed by proscenium (contained
aesthetic balance and harmony)
- manifest in lighting and design

- controlling structure and tone of the whole
- interest and attention fixed and focused to generate cathartic response
- cause and effect: rational, logical, "plot"⁴⁸

"the Unities" (neoclassical humanism)

- unity of time and space: simulates "reality" logical and controlled
- individualism: "man the measure of all things"

connections between episodes: made by...

- social type (e.g., clown, commentator)
- theatrical time and space of event
 - play between dramatic and actual time
- idea: could be viewed as "theme"
- mood

theatrical logic: acts, moments, gestic episodes
experiential, "lived through"

epic: personified cause with communal effect

- play between social heterogeneity and personal role in the collective community

**STAGE IMAGES:
THEATRICAL
SEMANTICS**

Emblematic⁴⁶

"illumination"⁵⁰

demonstration, show, spectacle (allegory)
"dramatic": (tension) character in situation

tableau vivant: static; symbolic picture
begs to be read or decoded

- plays on ambiguity and transformation of signs in juxtaposed relationship
- relies on audience's knowledge of codes denotation and connotation

"realization" "illustration" "pictorialization"

"situation" "iconic symbolization"⁵¹

pose, attitude (pantomime)

language as image: rhythm, rhyme, alliteration

puns

bold idiom, bawdy, sensual, cliché, topical

natural and sexual urges

gest: "discovery" "recognition" "moments"⁵²

gestic images: • rhythmic sequence

- spatial/architectonic
- visual effects

Coded by "verisimilitude": Aristotle⁵⁴

"humanism": "neoclassical"; "liberal"

- aesthetic of resemblance: presence, iconicity
- truth-telling: rational, authenticity
- recognizable referencing: codes
- "to enhance the illusion"⁵⁷
- "authentication": historical accuracy
credibility, plausibility of cause and effect

"naming": verbal labelling, identification, "it is"
assigns presence to image
a semiotic index

- closes the information sent by visual images
ambiguity erased, eliminates "noise"
- ordering of time and space; rationalized

reinforced meanings assigned to stage images

- refer to textual givens
- images interpret text
- become transparent as text becomes familiar

- tableaux "frozen moments"
 - archetypal personages⁸³
 - recognized as artificial, constructed, fictive
 - based on an idea: political, philosophical ethical, religious, social, psychological
 - instead of a literal picture of the "real" world
- ambiguity:
- symbolic signs
 - gesture, mime, pictorial, costume, props
 - "open": resist closure, multiple meanings associations
 - "undecided": no authorized meaning
 - correct reading not readily perceived
 - sequence, series, quantitative repetition: subverts moral reduction, open-ended⁸⁴
 - obscurity of symbolization (allegorical)
 - elicits ambivalence and anxiety because we seek neat solutions, order, familiarity
- "figurative":
- focus on iconicity
 - familiar but often anachronistic⁸⁵
 - costumes, props indicate types and generalities allegorical
 - familiar: coded as in everyday
 - fantastical and symbolic:
 - e.g., red suits with horns for the Devil
 - sword and balances for Justice
 - white gown and book for Truth
- symbolism is used ritualistically (allegorically)
- to express social ambivalence
 - grotesque, exaggeration, excess, spectacle, repetition, rhythm
 - images of taboo, pleasure and pain contradictions
 - slapstick humour, physical and verbal puns body humour, sexually explicit
 - cross-dressing

- signs: iconicity featured⁸⁶
- readily perceived meanings
 - "transparent" "literal" "face value"
 - closed, determined

- language-dominated:
- socially coded and conventionalized behaviour in time and space
 - limited meanings:
 - interpretation of enactment contained
 - states of feeling are intellectualized:
 - aesthetic, emotional, spiritual
- emphasize social order:
- hierarchical power is contained and sustained
 - rationalized and logical
 - humour: irony, "wit," satire, physically controlled and "gentle" verbal: intellectually "clever"
 - civilized

**STAGE EFFECTS
THEATRICAL
RHETORIC**

Spectacle: audio and visual

- can undermine singular point of view
- acknowledges fictive construction
"staged" "theatricality"
- variety, hyperbole (allegorical)
- excess, quantity
- unpredictability: surprise

emphasis on presentation: "imaginative"

- mixture of the novel and familiar
- "dramatic": extremes
suspense, tension, sentiment, colourful

"hold the audience's attention"⁵⁰

"wonder" "awe"

nonverbal effects: "whole sensory"

- music (carries emotion and idea)
- scenic: colour, tone, space and light⁶⁰
- kinetic: "turns" emphasis on skills
- spectacle: machinery
quantity, repetition
simultaneous action
ceremony

verbal effects: rhythm, rhyme

alliteration, puns

ritual liminality: "showing"; enactment

- exchange between audience and performers
- experience of event as outside the everyday
- not "ordinary" but a measure of the everyday

Effects in "high art" are erased; "normalized"

- achieved most easily in Realism and Naturalism
- elements of presentation denied⁶¹

"non-rhetorical" effects:

- vernacular, conversation
mimetic speech (imitative voice)
"natural" "restraint"⁶²
- coded gesture "natural"
- psychological: express thoughts
personal motives

simulate real time, real spaces: lighting

verbal references
scenic design⁶³

historical, archeological authentication,

museum authentication

objects, actions, people, places: named

- recognizable associations
- concern with the trivialities of life
- life models and "man-size" "natural"

elimination of spectacular and ceremonial

elements that are unrelated to

the historical event represented⁶⁴

theatricality subsumed in "verisimilitude"

- "authenticity" of stage images
- veiled fictiveness of stage enactment
- "as if" of the sign is eliminated
- assigned presence
- "photographic" realism, authentic

"After 1850, effects [were] repudiated" in favour of
"truth to the texture and experience of ordinary
life...Realism...attention to the particularity of
things...faithful reportage of external nature."⁶⁵

- "well-made" play
- effects labelled "sensational"
- conventions of illusion normalized
- closure and containment: "natural law"
"organic"

CHARACTER / ROLE

multiple actors; multiple roles
roles are fluid; many identities - same actor

caricature: two levels of performed action

- as character and as actor
- kept separatesm
- "is" and "is not" the character
- "static" no "development"
- "personation"

individual is a social agent

- symbol of traits
- emblems (e.g., rural, class, gender)

characteristics: grotesques, extremes

- boldly drawn
- strongly marked
- externals individuated to point of oddity
- clowns marked "ugly": Tarlton, Kemp, Armin

language - reinforces literary aesthetic values

- "rhetoric" / "anti-rhetorical"
- "elevated" poetry, wit, repartee, raconteur
- vernacular, conversational
- complex debate; intellectual
- poetry in prose
- idiosyncratic to author

aesthetic game rules naturalized:

- unemotional proportion, order: classical ideals
- "balance" "harmony" "unemotional" "rational"
- "not fabricated" "organic"
- logical cause
- restraint, understatement, contained
- "art" objectified, disinterested, a product

single actor; single role

character: • "completely" drawn

- consistent, "developed" characterization
- psychological, individuals: "individualization"
- signifying elements: meanings closed
- ideological: identifiable allegiances, values coded in character complexity in multidimensionality
- "impersonation" instead of "personation"sm
- motivation: psychological "true" to the givens in the text

individualism foregrounded: "self-realization"
"revelation"
anagnorisis

an agent of rationalized cause and effect

- otherwise "surreal"
- often rationalized as a "dream"

- "dietic" function: semiotic index
- indicates action, thing or person⁶⁷
 - social context

language:

- mimic, vernacular
 - engaging - rhythm, rhyme
 - familiar cliché
 - to type
- particularities of the personal and individual are at play with the generalities of social type

TALKING ABOUT CHARACTER / ACTOR RELATIONSHIP

Mimicry

- interplay of absence/"is" and presence/"is not"
- "becoming": ritual, transformation, process
rite of passage
- "as if"; pretend
- acting acknowledged
- "seeming exterior masking hidden truth"⁶⁹
- symbolic and figurative (iconic) at play
- separation: "the person representing" /
"the person represented"⁷⁰
- demonstration rather than imitation⁷¹
- metamorphosis: insight "knowing"
- physical and spiritual transformation
- masquerade⁷²
- "exaggeration" "caricature"

Mimesis

- does not acknowledge: pretence, fictiveness,
theatricality, "as if"
- works toward: exterior reality
psychological inner reality
- meaning is literal: what is presented is
"truth" "actual"⁷³
- "replication":
"copy or image of the actual world"⁷⁴
- "representation": "is" (present) "real"
"truthful" "resemblance" "portrait"⁷⁵
- "as if" becomes "behaves" "looks like"
- symbolic collapse into properties of iconicity
e.g., Mass participants "represent" society
(Maries, disciples, Jews and Gentiles)
and individual hero (Christ)

ENDNOTES

¹ My articulation of the **popular** in this section is informed by my reading of John Fiske, *Understanding Popular Culture*.

² **Aesthetic stage effects** can be seen as a type of **rhetorical effects** in the context of communication theory. A **metatheatrical effect** is a semiotic **index** which says to the participant: "This phenomenon is theatre." The results of metatheatrical effects (or factors) are (a) to raise the expectations of the audience-participants; (b) to engage the audience-participants in employing certain conventions for decoding purposes; and (c) to indicate that the audience-participants are to perceive the experience through the theatrical imaginary. For information on metacommunication processes, as theorized by Gregory Bateson, see Paul Watzlawick, Janet Helmick Beavin and Don D. Jackson, *Pragmatics of Human Communication: A Study of Interactional Patterns, Pathologies, and Paradoxes* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1967) — in particular, Chapters 1 and 2. Other texts used intertextually for this performance are: Susan Bennett, *Theatre Audiences: A Theory of Production and Reception* (London: Routledge, 1990); Baz Kershaw, *The Politics of Performance*; and Bernard Beckerman, *Theatrical Presentation*.

It may be argued that all theatre events are "popular" to some degree according to the criteria presented in this performance, if we chose to view them as such. This is certainly the approach taken by Richard Southern in *The Seven Ages of the Theatre* (see in particular, p. 59).

³ McKechnie, pp. 29-54; various entries in Appendix B traced by "Bartholomew Fair." In particular, see entries under 1133; 1614; 1699; 1707; 1728; 1816 and 1825.

⁴ McKechnie, pp. 135-174; appears in Appendix B under 1576; 1826; 1843; 1850; 1860; 1872; 1880; 1881; 1882; 1884; 1885; 1888; 1890 and 1891.

⁵ It is interesting to note that in the discourse these roles are always gendered male.

⁶ "Spirit" here may be misleading because we conventionally equate "spirit" with "religion." "Religion," I would maintain, is the rationalized form of spirituality; the issue is "spiritual fulfilment" not religious practice.

⁷ Wiles, p. 154.

⁸ These are well illustrated in all the texts on pantomime included in this research. See also Alan Hughes, "Art and Eighteenth-Century Acting Style. Part I: Aesthetics," *Theatre Notebook*, *XLJ*(1), (1987), pp. 24-31 and Roach, "Theatre History and the Ideology of the Aesthetic."

⁹ Frye, *Anatomy of Criticism*, p. 63.

¹⁰ Carroll, *The Cultural Theory of Matthew Arnold*, p. 61.

¹¹ Meisel, p. 33.

¹² Carroll, p. 61.

¹³ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 127.

¹⁴ "Redundancy": The same message is repeated through several audio or visual channels so that it is reinforced. Thomas A. Sebeok, "Pandora's Box: How and Why to Communicate 10,000 Years into the Future," *On Signs*, Marshall Blonsky (Ed.) (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins, 1985), pp. 448-474.

¹⁵ Beckerman, p. 91.

¹⁶ "The Elizabethan audience were not detached observers peering through a proscenium at a mimesis of social reality; rather, they were in a position to become an incorporated element in the *ludus*, the world of play." Wiles, p. 132.

¹⁷ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 57; cf. Hattaway, pp. 79-83.

¹⁸ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. II*, p. 143.

¹⁹ Wiles, pp. 158-59.

²⁰ Wiles, pp. 96-98.

²¹ Beckerman, p. 77.

²² Michael Taussig, *Shamanism, Colonialism, and the Wild Man: A Study in Terror and Healing* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1987), pp. 442-43.

²³ "Reality": There is a political privilege, that is legitimated by the dominant power structures, implicit in this term. The community collectively reinforces and participates complicitly in the dissemination of this term as representing authorized and authenticated Truth. Resistance is possible; an actor's performance can be a resistant reading of this "Reality." See *Reimagining America: The Arts of Social Change*, Mark O'Brien and Craig Little (Eds.) (Philadelphia: New Society Publishers, 1990).

²⁴ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 130.

²⁵ "All commentary is allegory...interpretation." Frye, p. 89. Allegory is an interpretive pattern which orders otherwise discontinuous fragments into an abstract whole. It is legitimated as "symbol" and "myth" when "symbol" stands for the aesthetic code which presents transcendent revelation and "myth" means a paradigm of constant archetypes. In both cases, they have fixed meanings. Refer to Angus Fletcher, "Introduction," *Allegory: The Theory of a Symbolic Mode* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1964), pp. 1-23.

²⁶ See Estelle Manette Raben, *Major Strategies in Twentieth Century Drama: Apocalyptic Vision, Allegory and Open Form* (New York: Peter Lang, 1989), pp. 17-22.

²⁷ Frye, p. 138. also Walter Benjamin, *The Origin of German Tragic Drama*, John Osborne (Trans.) (London: NLB, 1977), p. 283.

²⁸ Fletcher, p. 151.

²⁹ Benjamin, p. 177.

³⁰ "Scenes which are genuinely visual are the only ones which belong in the theatre. Allegorical characters, these are what people mostly see. Children are hopes. Young girls are wishes and requests." Translation of Novalis, in Benjamin, p. 191.

³¹ Fletcher, p. 172.

³² Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, p. 103.

³³ Fletcher, p. 330.

³⁴ Fletcher, p. 135.

³⁵ Meisel, p. 61.

³⁶ Franco Ruffini, "Horizontal and Vertical Montage in the Theatre," *New Theatre Quarterly*, II(5), (February 1986), pp. 29-37.

³⁷ Taussig, pp. 442-43.

³⁸ Taussig, p. 328.

³⁹ Meisel, pp. 56, 61.

⁴⁰ Beckerman, p. 50.

⁴¹ Hardison, p. 271.

⁴² Hattaway, p. 54.

⁴³ Meisel, p. 211.

⁴⁴ Meisel, p. 20.

⁴⁵ Beckerman, p. 95.

⁴⁶ Beckerman, p. 54.

⁴⁷ Beckerman, p. 61.

⁴⁸ Beckerman, p. 63.

⁴⁹ "It was more natural [conventional] for spectators to assume that what they saw and heard was an emblem in which truth was to be divined than that text, acting, costume and setting represented an exact copy or image of the actual world." Wickham, quoted in Findlater, p. 16.

⁵⁰ Beckerman, p. 55.

⁵¹ "A man's fur collar and cigar or a woman's full bosom — came to signal not merely moral qualities, but predictable functions in plot and situation. In the iconography of emotion, interior experience was conveyed through conventionalized language of facial expression, pose, and gesture, sometimes remote from the gestures of contemporary life, but not narrowly bound to tradition either." Meisel, p. 5.

⁵² Walter Benjamin, "The Author as Producer," *Art After Modernism: Rethinking Representation*, Brian Wallis (Ed.) (New York: The New Museum of Contemporary Art, 1984), pp. 306-307. (Essay: pp. 297-311).

⁵³ Hattaway, p. 57.

⁵⁴ Hattaway, p. 59.

⁵⁵ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume One, Part I*, p. 158.

⁵⁶ "Aristotle established the technique of mimetic discourse based on the existence of a certain *verisimilitude* deposited in the minds of men of a tradition, Wise Men, the majority current opinion, etc. What is convincing in a work of discourse is that which contradicts none of these authorities." Barthes, *Criticism and Truth*, Katrine Pilcher Keuneman (Trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), p. 34.

⁵⁷ Hardison, p. 239.

⁵⁸ cf. Worth, pp. 162-184.

⁵⁹ Ruffini, p. 30.

⁶⁰ Meisel, pp. 71-72.

⁶¹ Beckerman, p. 110.

⁶² Meisel, pp. 351-56.

⁶³ cf. Burns, p. 95.

⁶⁴ Hardison, p. 271.

⁶⁵ Meisel, pp. 351-56.

⁶⁶ Hattaway, p. 79.

⁶⁷ Beckerman, p. 95.

⁶⁸ Burns, pp. 161-69.

⁶⁹ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 17.

⁷⁰ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. viii.

⁷¹ Beckerman, p. 47.

⁷² Luce Irigaray's term. See Elin Diamond, "Mimesis, Mimicry, and the 'True-Real,'" *Modern Drama*, XXXII(1), (March, 1989), pp. 58-72.

⁷³ Beckerman, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Wickham, *Early English Stages, Volume Two, Part I*, p. 17.

⁷⁵ Phelan, p. 45.

CHAPTER 9

MARKING THE POPULAR:
SECOND WAVE PRODUCTIONS

PERFORMANCE VI

9.0 Strategies: Generating Still Images from Video

Now that I have learned something about popular conventions and how they have been (and are) used in theatrical productions as coded conventions, I have applied this knowledge to my reading (perception and decoding) of the three sample productions from the Second Wave Alternate Theatre which I introduced in Chapter 3: *Tears of a Dinosaur* (One Yellow Rabbit, Calgary), *Doctor Dapertutto* (Theatre Columbus, Toronto), and *Down North* (St. Ann's Bay Players, Cape Breton Island). I maintain that these productions offer audiences a theatrical experience which **negotiates** an aesthetic territory that bisociatively incorporates both the literary and the popular theatre model. The metatheatrical elements of these Second Wave events are not structured according to the popular model I devised in Performance IV, so we are not, from the moment we arrive at the performance site, alert to the popular conventions which will be incorporated into the production. Instead, because these productions display the indices of **the normalized theatre** such as the architectural separation of the audience from the end stage and we are used to reading/perceiving

staged drama through the codes of the literary model, we tend to neutralize their difference.¹

The reviews which were gathered by each company for their files and my interviews with the company members and other collaborators confirm that the discourse, which constructs these productions as theatrical entities, frames these events in terms of the paradigm of the literary theatre. These same reviews and the collaborators' response to their critics indicate that this literary frame of reference is problematic to say the least.² In all three productions, criticism targeted the lack of a clearly developed plot or the political ambiguity of the message, the preoccupation with choreographed demonstration and physicality as well as the lack of character development and breaks (usually assumed to be unintentional) in the unity of the sustained illusion. It is important to note that reviewers were not necessarily finding fault with these productions because of these elements but still these were the critical issues which found print space.

In this final performance, I have worked with Kevin Chuback in Education Services Group - Television Services, University of Victoria, to generate still images from the video documentation which each company provided for its respective production. Because these videos were taken for historical rather than aesthetic reasons, their quality leaves much to be desired. This deficiency was carried into the images of the productions which were captured by computer scanning and then generated in dot

matrix format by a laser printer. The images were computer enhanced by means of a program which intensified the black and white contrast of the printed dots. This process sharpened edges and created clearer definition between objects and their backgrounds.

This process of working with videos as documentary source material presented a further challenge in that, unlike film which can be frozen in isolated frames, video images can be captured only while the tape is running. I could stop the images according to a predetermined setting on the linear time tape counter (by pressing the computer's mouse), but I had no guarantee that the exact image I saw on the screen was the one captured by the computer. Because the tape continues to run while the computer captures the image, the process is only precise to a degree and there is always some blurring and distortion if the figures in the video are moving. Added to these computer difficulties, inadequate focus, clarity, colour shading differential and distortion originating with the video tape copy were only magnified when the images were photocopied for circulation. The fact remains, however, that these videos are all of the significant pictorial evidence I have of these productions and this is typical when working with theatre companies that have limited funds. Once I came to terms with the deficiencies of the process, I recognized that this Performance VI also spoke to the difficulties which theatre historians face when they wish to

incorporate the experience of alternate theatre companies into the body of common knowledge.

When it came to choosing images representative of each production, I was therefore limited by the technological process and the resource⁷ of Television Services which required that I select only twelve (12) theatrical moments from each tape. Each image was captured on one disk and took considerable time to produce. I found that by captioning the images as I stopped the video tape, I was able to indicate to Chuback the theatrical or dramatic idea I was trying to convey with a particular image. This facilitated another degree of technical control; because Chuback had some knowledge of my intent, he was able to intervene in the process to some degree and suit the image to the words. I have included variations on these captions to provide textual interplay with the video pictures and to facilitate the reader's interpretation of the theatrical moment.

I am hoping that in the course of this performance, the reader is able to embrace (or, at least, to forgive) the ambiguity of these selected visual images. I cannot overstate the anxiety which I experienced during this process because of the lack of control over the quantity and quality of the end product; the risks seem great because the stakes are high!

9.1 Strategies: Talking about the Productions

The theoretical grounding for this performance comes from Gombrich's theory of aesthetic perception. In *Art and Illusion*, Gombrich wrote:

Nothing is seen even in the spectacle before us, until it be in some measure otherwise previously known and sought for, and numberless observable differences between the ages of ignorance and those of knowledge show how much the contraction or the extension of our field of vision depends upon other considerations than the simple return of our mere natural optics. The people, then, of those early ages only saw so much, and admired it, because they knew no more.³

Allowing for the fact that Gombrich's context was painting and not theatre and that he favours visual over other means of sensory perception, the point is made that symbolic codes and their interpretive conventions are learned.⁴ If we look for the conventions of popular theatre, we will either find them or note their absence.

For each production, therefore, I have chosen a popular theatre genre or technique within which to contextualize each performance as a **popular theatre event**. For *Tears of a Dinosaur*, this context was puppetry (a popular theatre technique or style) and for *Doctor Dapertutto*, it was pantomime (a popular theatre genre). For *Down North*, contextualized by the company's affiliation with the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance,⁵ local performance conventions were used.

I believe *Down North* can be called a "political community performance," a phrase coined by Baz Kershaw,⁶ which allows us to think in terms of employing local performance customs (folk customs) without objectifying these traditions as quaint remnants of a cultural past. Kershaw points out that these customs carry a sense of the continuity of deeply-felt meaning for the community which allows audiences to relate contemporary experience to their collective knowledge; the past is brought into the present to inform the future.⁷ In this case, the performance is contextualized by the social and political function of popular theatre (i.e., to examine life experience and to initiate change if it is socially warranted).

My next task was to consider what I would talk about when referring to these video images. What information could be discerned from each picture? Certainly not the plot or linear narrative. Instead, I indicate to the reader the basic idea of the dramatic allegory which, along with context, is provided to influence the reader's interpretation of the images. Each image is considered a theatrical moment, emblematic of the drama and captioned as such. I do not consider each picture individually because this seemed to be repetitive and to leave little room for the reader's participation. Rather, before each series, I offer the reader a brief discussion of the context, allegory and some of the popular conventions which are evident in the images.

Remembering that I have experienced these plays in live performance as well as on video many times while, in all likelihood, the reader has not, I have also included some information about the productions which the images cannot tell. In general, these black and white pictures cannot convey the riotous colour which marked all three productions,⁸ nor the rhythmic pulse established by the variations of tempo and tone set by the music and soundscapes which also include the aural qualities of the language. Many of the most effective moments could not be captured or conveyed effectively because of the limitations of the process of reproduction. For instance, the scene which, from all reports, stirred *Down North* audiences the most was the account of the burning of the company store; it was based on a local yarn that, in a gesture of unity, everyone took responsibility for lighting the first match. This was staged so that, at the most intense point, after each performer had struck a match and joined the chorus of "I lit the match...", there was a black out; in the darkness, the flicker of many small flames could be seen for a few poignant seconds. Audiences were overwhelmed with the sense of community solidarity, whether they agreed or disagreed with the subversive action against the company which had given employment to many of their families. This highly theatrical moment is missing from my series of *Down North* images; it could not be reproduced on paper. Consequently, I cannot claim that I have included the most effective, the most significant or the most representative moments of each show. Still, I believe

there is merit and value in considering the images which were possible as a result of this imprecise process.

9.2 *Tears of a Dinosaur: Child's Play for Adults*

The most obvious theatrical element on stage in this production is the collection of puppets, in particular the enormous marionette of a dinosaur skeleton, "Grace," which looms large over the dramatic presentation and delineates the upstage and stage right boundaries of the playing space. "Grace" also houses three doppelgänger marionettes which are dressed like (and therefore, make reference to) the three live characters in the play. These puppets remain on stage through the whole performance as symbolic effigies of the live actors *in their own image*. They hang from the dinosaur's belly, framed in proscenium (coded "puppet theatre") style by her legs.

This overt use of puppetry alerts us to a performance style which is part of the popular theatre tradition. If we are willing to acknowledge⁹ the potency of this strategy in terms of the self-conscious exploitation of theatricality, we can begin to recognize how the normalized conventions of **the theatre** have been challenged by this technique.¹⁰ Their presence on stage shatters any illusion of reality.

Puppets, like dolls and other votive images, attract the human gaze beyond the point of rationality; we project onto these artificial and imperfect human figures all sorts of life-like qualities so that their wooden movements

and empty stares are transformed into re-presentations of our own behaviours, passions and desires.¹¹ Puppets arouse human wonder at the mystery of life and humanity. They play on the metaphysical meaning of existence by confronting the audience with issues of existential absence and presence: Who is the puppet here? Who is being manipulated? Who are we? Who am I?

In terms of performance traditions, the chronology indicates, that puppets and dolls have played key roles in theatre production during every time zone. Examples are corn dollies made from the last harvest¹² and other seasonal effigies such as giants and the hobby-horse,¹³ detachable Christ figures which "bled" at the appropriate moment during the Lenten Agon¹⁴ and the Punch and Judy puppets carried by itinerant players¹⁵ to the more organized shows which Samuel Foote offered to elegant ladies and gentlemen.¹⁶ Gordon Craig's championing of the puppet "ubermarionette" over the live actor is well documented in conventional theatre history; the puppet has become a familiar figure in productions labelled "avant garde." Even George Bernard Shaw wrote of puppets: "The *mimicry* by which it suggests human gesture in unearthly *caricature*...[gives] to the performance an intensity to which few actors can *pretend*."¹⁷

In *Tears of a Dinosaur*, the idea of puppets is also reiterated in the choreographed movement of Roy (the father), Liz (the mother) and Ray (the son). The exaggerated poses and self-conscious gestures can be read as

"wooden" or puppet-like. Figure 12 shows a posed embrace between Liz and Roy as they seal their pact to find a child to complete their family. The warmth of Roy's words is undermined by the stilted attitude he strikes and Liz, while hanging from Roy's neck, seems lost in his clutch. Liz, too, performs, as a puppet and puppetmaster. In Fig. 14, she makes a dinosaur shape with her hand, an image motif which plays, in counterpoint, to her words about isolation. In a scene not illustrated in the images, she operates the Liz puppet while talking about her experiences as a mother; her body movements are repeated in precision to her manipulation of her puppet replica. For example, when Liz manoeuvres the puppet to bend from the waist, she also bends from the waist.

From the outset of the play, Liz and Roy are seen dressed in their underclothes and seem doll-like in their vulnerability. With the blonde wig, Liz looks like a Barbie doll in her black lace bra and red crinoline. Roy, too, paces the set (their home) in his boxershorts and undershirt, appearing manly but also ridiculously unprepared to meet the world.

At the top of the show, Roy enters to the popular song "Our House" by Crosby, Stills and Nash, crossing the stage in long, deliberate strides, stopping to the left of the table on which small toy dinosaurs are arranged around and on top of an inverted cereal bowl. Slowly, leaning over the table, Roy begins an erotic mimicry of fellatio, which the audience soon realizes results in the inflation of a vinyl toy dinosaur. Liz's first entrance is a

frenzied free-form dance for Roy's attention, arms and legs akimbo like a doll being manipulated by her human playmate. Ray, the prospective son, makes his first appearance dressed in a sparkly-blue dinosaur suit, cut like tattered overalls and covered with the shafts of embedded arrows (Fig. 13). Ray looks like a martyred stuffed toy. After Roy chooses Ray to be his son, Ray is taken to meet Liz; like Roy and Liz, Ray wears only his underwear.

The three are united as a family through the ceremony of getting dressed, after which they appear as the doubles of the marionette figures. By contextualizing our reading of this performance through puppetry, our perception (reading of this play) opens to the toy and doll imagery. This imagery codes this ritual drama and reinforces the central idea of playing pretend. The theatrical effects create a sense of child-like wonder¹⁸ reinforced by a soundtrack of eerie environmental noises, including the imagined call of the dinosaur herself who inhabits this theatre world of symbolic abstraction coded as "home." We also know and hear in her cry the forewarning of her inevitable extinction. But here she is theatrically alive before us as a puppet in the timeless present and unlocalized space of allegory.

One allegorical meaning of this drama is **the possible (perhaps inevitable?) extinction of the traditional family unit.**

Tears of a Dinosaur

Written and Directed by Blake Brooker
Music and Soundscape composed by Richard McDowell

Cast	
Denise Clark	<i>Liz</i>
Michael Green	<i>Roy</i>
Andy Curtis and Jarvis Hall	<i>Roy</i>

Production Staff	
Lighting Design/Production Manager	<i>Sandi Somers</i>
Puppet and Costume Design	<i>Ronnie Burkett</i>
Grace the Dinosaur created by	<i>Sandi Somers</i>
Tour Manager/Administration	<i>Grant Burns</i>

Fig. 10: "Home" defined: Roy sets the laws;
Liz sets the table

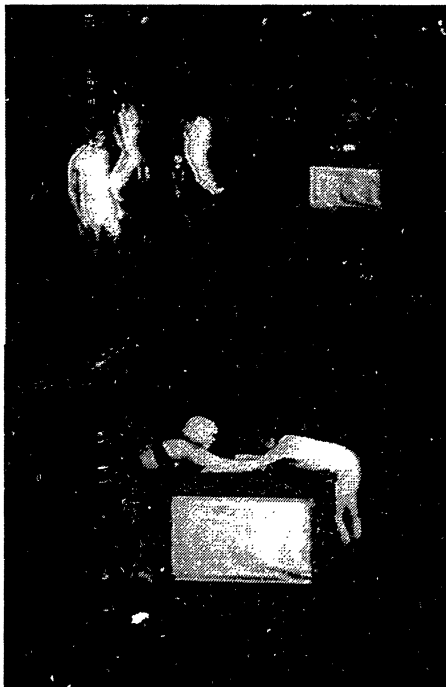
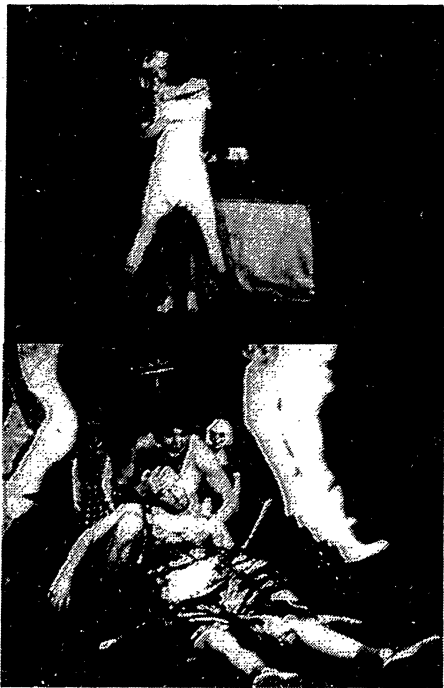


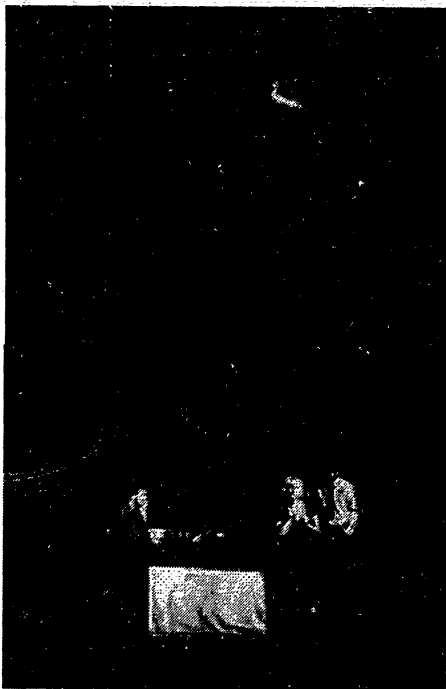
Fig. 11: The childless couple

Fig. 12: The pact to find a child: a desperate clutch



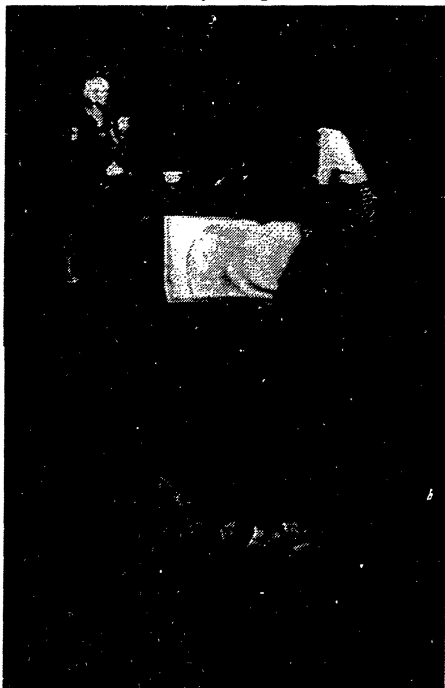
**Fig. 13: Pieta variation I: Father (Roy) finds Son (Ray)
while puppet doppelgangers look on**

**Fig. 14: Liz feels her isolation:
What is being a mother...wife...woman?**



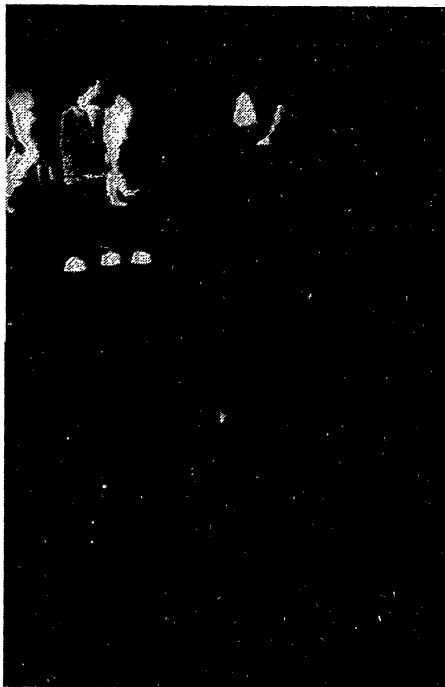
**Fig. 15: Family at home: Ray eats his breakfast
Liz knits and dreams
Roy paces and lectures**

**Fig. 16: Family conflict: Liz nurtures; Roy attacks
Ray is caught in the middle**



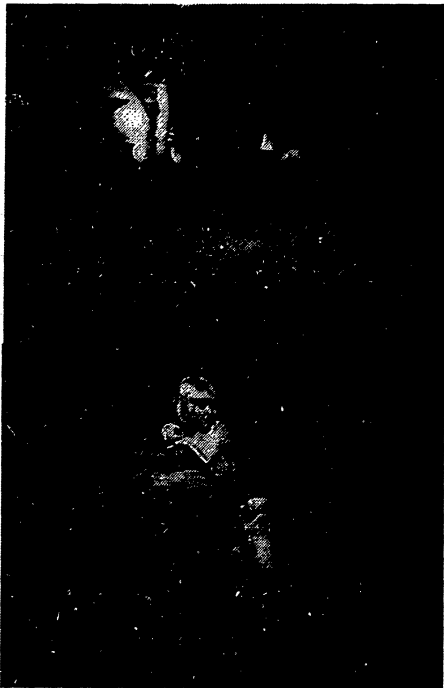
**Fig. 17: Mating ritual: Roy wears dinosaur head
Liz is covered in toy dinosaurs**

Fig. 18: Ray observes Roy and Liz



**Fig. 19: Father teaches his son how to hunt the dinosaur
Ray on the lookout**

**Fig. 20: Ray manipulates Roy puppet riding dinosaur
Roy doubts his father role**



**Fig. 21: Pièta variation II: Liz nurses Ray
Roy in dinosaur hood mask
clutches Liz in desperation**

9.3 *Doctor Dapertutto: The Return of Harlequin and Clown*

In letters to The Canada Council kept in the company files, we find that the original *Doctor Dapertutto* workshop financed by a Chalmers' grant, was to be an exploration of ideas about social types using masks as a performance style. This, the applicants admit, was a move away from their usual work in clown, although mask work had been part of their training at Lecoq's school in Paris. Interestingly, Mark Christmann,¹⁹ who played Dapertutto, was recorded as "mask director" in the list of the workshop collaborators. This list also included Susan Mackenzie, an accomplished Toronto choreographer, who ultimately developed the signature dances for each character in the final version of the production.

In *The World of Harlequin*, Allardyce Nicoll observed that the use of mask in traditional Commedia dell'arte (Italian) restricts facial expression and thus the body is required to mediate the particular traits of character which we refer to as the character's *persona*. "Masks serve to stress the essential theatricality of the production itself....The employment of masks for at least the more dynamic characters...had the further virtue of placing emphasis on the actor's whole body."²⁰

While masks were rejected for the second stage of the play's development, the company continued to explore character through movement, especially ballroom dancing, and returned to creating character through the process of clowning. Even without the masks, the coding of character in

situation remained focussed on the body so that the drama was centred around the physical *gestus*.²¹

When we look closer at the conventions of English pantomime which, over its long history, incorporate both Harlequin and Clown, we find that inadvertently many of the effects which were used in pantomime were used by the collaborators of *Doctor Dapertutto*. Once we become familiar with the traditions of pantomime, we can read the production in terms of this popular theatre genre.²² As well as physical movement, these effects exploit the theatricality of spectacle using sound, costume, scenic display and lighting. The company overcame the restraints imposed by time and money budgets and the limits of a small under-equipped, ill-designed theatre, so that the production captures an element of the magic of visual transformation which we know is characteristic of pantomime.

Meisel maintains that in pantomime, "one scene mysteriously grows out of another with ingenuity and fancy."²³ The set of the main hall in *Dapertutto's* villa in New Mexico, as shown in Fig. 26, is a three-unit arrangement of seven arches that look like stucco but are actually made of styrofoam. The central unit contains three arches and the side units are L-shaped with two arches each. The cast smoothly manipulates these wheeled units to create the isolated spaces which serve as various rooms resorting only to the occasional realistic visual reference such as a desk or bed. These scene changes are choreographed and accompanied by special lighting

effects and music so that, to the audience's delight, each scene "grows out of the other" usually with the help of Dapertutto's diabolical gyrations. The confined stage space of the Poor Alex theatre also contributes to the farcical use of staged confusion as the archways facilitate chases, surprise discoveries and surreptitious spying, intensifying the dramatic tension through visual comedy.

The character of Dapertutto recalls Harlequin primarily through use of the physical codes or poses known as "attitudes," which are now commonly referred to as "balletic"²⁴ postures and positions. Harlequin's association with magic and transformation and, in many instances, with fire links this character to the demonic Vice in allegorical Moralities,²⁵ as well as to the popular character, Faustus, who is frequently found in the puppet shows and "drolls" of the fairground.²⁶

In his book, *History of Harlequin*, Cyril Beaumont included Leigh Hunt's vivid description of one nineteenth-century Harlequin (played by Tom Ellar²⁷), which could be a model for Christmann's performance of Dapertutto:

In comes Harlequin, demi-masked, party-coloured, nimble-toed, lithe, agile; bending himself now this way, now that; bridling up like a pigeon; tipping out his toe like a dancer; then taking a fantastic skip; then standing ready at all points, and at right angles with his omnipotent lath-sword, the emblem of the converting power of fancy and light-heartedness. Giddy as we think him, he is resolved to show us that his head can bear more giddiness

than we fancy; and lo! beginning with it by degrees, he whirls it round into a spin, with no more remorse than if it were a button. Then he draws his sword, slaps his enemy, who has just come upon him, into a settee; and springing upon him, dashes through the window like a swallow.²⁸

Of course, Doctor Dapertutto does not wear a mask nor the diamond-motley of Harlequin. His cream-coloured vest and jacket plus light brown trousers point to the more contemporary costumed elegance of the magician, who traditionally dazzles us in formal evening attire. Dapertutto's costume reinforces, through a dapper but sleazy veneer, his role as agent of cosmological authority; his look, including his slicked-back hair, is a well-tailored disguise for this minister of chaos.²⁹

Christmann's flamboyant performance, however, did maintain the physical spectacle described by Hunt. His tricks may not have been the same as Ellar's but still virtuosity, agility and grace were highlighted in every entrance, exit, exaggerated pose and gestural grace note and told us as much about his character and motives as any verbal text. As well, Dapertutto carried the tell-tale sign of Harlequin — a variation of the sword or bat — a cane. Dapertutto's cane, like Harlequin's sword and bat, reminds us of the magician's source of power, his magic wand.

If we look, too, at the other characters in the play, we recognize the coded externals of the individual clown *persona* which are emblematic of their social type. Strictly speaking, we must describe these performances as

caricatures because they employ **mimicry** rather than the real-life psychological correspondences of **mimesis**. The actor is never lost in the presentation of a clown because we are always aware of the mask-like effect of the *persona* and that it is a skilful actor who wears and performs it.

The effect of mimicry is reinforced in *Doctor Dapertutto* by the theatrical strategy of character doubling. The actor's skill at transforming from one person to another, often following a short turnabout exit and re-entrance, added another level of playful confusion to the production.³⁰ The audience, fully aware that actors were playing more than one clown role, got caught up in following this protean magic. My personal response was amazement because it did not register at first that there was doubling and when it did, I could not sort out who was playing which roles. The effect, when I learned the truth, was wonderment and awe, not because the actors had established different but real characters, but because of the subtlety — in spite of the grotesque exaggeration which is the mark of a clown³¹ — and the display of performance skill, both vocal and physical. During the performance, I had obviously become as naive and open to the theatrical pretence (a variation on suspension of disbelief) as this array of stage buffoons had displayed gullibility in the face of Dapertutto's manipulations!

As we saw with Dapertutto, social codes are carried in costume and colour choices. Each character is built around individualized variations on general semiotic conventions and their corresponding human qualities, such

as white hats for good guys and black hats for bad ones. The two outrageous woman clowns, April Owens (Martha Ross) from New York and May White (Keiley Nadal) from Texas wear polka dots, garish colours, pedal pushers and many crinolines, while the conservative Canadian, June Leek (Maggie Huculak) arrived at the villa in a pink but more tailored suit, clutching to her heart her oversized handbag, which we find out is filled with a book by Freud and tranquilizers.

Hats also signal character-type: the Texan, Ed White (Oliver Dennis) arrives in his big ten-gallon stetson, while Thomas (also Dennis), the suicidal bellhop, wears a Turkish fez with the tassel drooping over his face. The two maids, Shirley (Huculak) and Donna (Nadal) look ridiculous in their maids' caps (Fig. 25), which are historically accurate in design but are also visually silly. These costume particulars are not out of place in terms of what we accept as late-40s/early-50s trends, but the exploitation and exaggeration of certain details such as size add to the visual humour.

One interesting example of the semiotic use of hats occurs when Mr. Bradley (Diego Matamoros), a crying wimp, reappears at the New Year's Eve party wearing two cone-shaped party hats, one above each ear. Not only does he look outrageously funny, but the coded meaning of "cuckold" transgresses the normalcy of social mating practices represented by the other three couples: the Owens, Whites and Leeks. Mr. Bradley, a bachelor, is a pathetic failure even as a dancing partner!

The meanings generated by clowning are based on the performed semiotics of two- and three-person relationships. One clown stands for social order or "the system" while the other, a dialectical foil, transgresses the system or stands for social chaos. Figures 24 to 31 show *in situ* a few of the possible combinations of duos and trios. Examples include the two uniformed maids (Fig. 25) and the three men dressed for play in their undershirt and trousers, complete with a martini glass, the sign of a clown-drunk (Fig. 31). Also, the play unfolds episodically in scenes where Dapertutto, recalling Harlequin, confronts the individual clowns: for example, with Dr. Dick Frank (Michael Simpson), the scientist (Fig. 27) and with Thomas, who leans on his broom, subversively reiterating Dapertutto's cane (Fig. 30).

Because of the permanent end stage architectural configuration of the Poor Alex theatre, the set for *Doctor Dapertutto* was designed to meet the conventions of the fourth-wall, which in the theatre of illusion serves to divide the stage world from the audience's world. The stage opening in this case acts as a frame for the performance and therefore follows (unintentionally) the traditional pictorial conventions of English pantomime.³² At the same time, the pantomimic acting style, which includes posing and physical slapstick, undermines the illusion and directly engages the audience in the on-stage antics, breaking the imagined barrier separating performers from onlookers. Other theatrical techniques subvert the closure of the stage world. For example, Dapertutto addresses the audience directly

when he reveals his evil machinations. As well, the covert theatricality of the choreographed dances, including the luxurious tango and other mating rituals indulged in by Dapertutto and his better half, Pearl (Leah Cherniak) (Fig. 33), are executed with a self-consciousness that implicitly says to the audience, "I am aware you are watching me and I am performing this dance for you. We are all in this hypothetical world together."

Traditionally, English pantomime involved a double plot: one serious and one comic, and one story was separated from the other by an elaborate transformation scene. Obviously, *Dapertutto* is not structured like pantomime because it was never intended to be pantomime. The play does, however, have a double plot — a serious one about the detonation of a bomb which Dapertutto uses to demonstrate that his powers for evil still rule supreme³³ and the second comic plot about mating which involves all the characters in various Romantic (sexually coded) relationships. This **doubling** should alert us to the conventions of **allegory**, which undermine any attempt to interpret this drama literally.

There are no clear messages in *Doctor Dapertutto* and no clear answers to any of the problems established by the theatrical enactment. The codes are ambiguous and just when we think we know the point of the play we realize the clowns have only succeeded in confusing the issue. We are confronted with performed moral ambivalence. In the final scene Dapertutto, ready to die, drags himself out with Pearl, but we cannot be sure he will not come to life again as he did several times during the play. Scared

by the idea of obliteration by a bomb, the clowns run away in hysterical confusion only to return to dance the frug while a strobe light imitates atomic flashes. What a joke it has all been!

The ambiguity allows us to assign many possible readings to *Doctor Dapertutto*. We can see it as a parody on canonized texts, referring to *Dr. Faustus*, *The Tales of Hoffman* or *Adam and Eve meet the Serpent*. The allusions are not always direct but cultural spin-offs provide us with popular codes that are familiar frames of reference so that we are able to recognize these ideas in Theatre Columbus' play. We can see *Doctor Dapertutto* as a commentary on social arrangements, in particular on coupling. The drama is also about the reactions and interactions of people in times of crisis, about fascistic manipulation, about the gendering of relationships. Misogyny and homophobia, which are issues not directly addressed in the text, are coded visually. This play is about the politics of control (i.e., the men behind the women and the women behind the men). This is a play that addresses what is goodness and what is evil without telling us what to think; it is a moral allegory. One possible allegorical meaning of the drama is **human self-destructiveness in whatever shape or form is more powerful than any cosmic force of good and evil.**

Doctor Dapertutto

Written by Martha Ross
 Directed by Leah Cherniak
 Choreography by Susan McKenzie

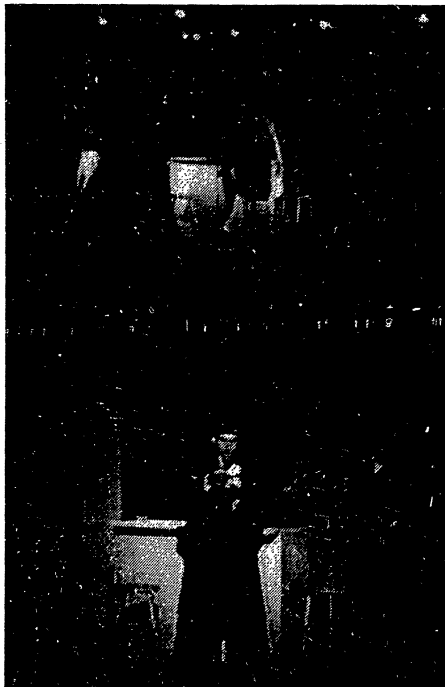
Cast

Leah Cherniak	<i>Pearl</i>
Mark Christmann	<i>Doctor Dapertutto</i>
Oliver Dennis	<i>Thomas/Ed White</i>
Maggie Huculak	<i>Shirley/June Leek</i>
Diego Matamoros	<i>Bill Owen/Seymour Bradley</i>
Kelley Nadal	<i>Donna/May White</i>
Martha Ross	<i>April Owen</i>
Michael Simpson	<i>Dick Frank/Bob Leek</i>

Production Staff

Set & Lighting Design	<i>Glenn Davidson</i>
Costume Design	<i>Carole Griffin</i>
Musical Composition	<i>John Millard</i>
Production Administrator	<i>Jennifer Brewin</i>
Publicity	<i>Julie Bishop</i>

**Fig. 22: 1962 - Countdown to Happy New Year...
bombed!**



**Fig. 23: Diabolical mystery man makes fire magic
for Dr. Dick Frank**

**Fig. 24: 1949 - Dapertutto anticipates his guests
and Thomas the bellhop assists**

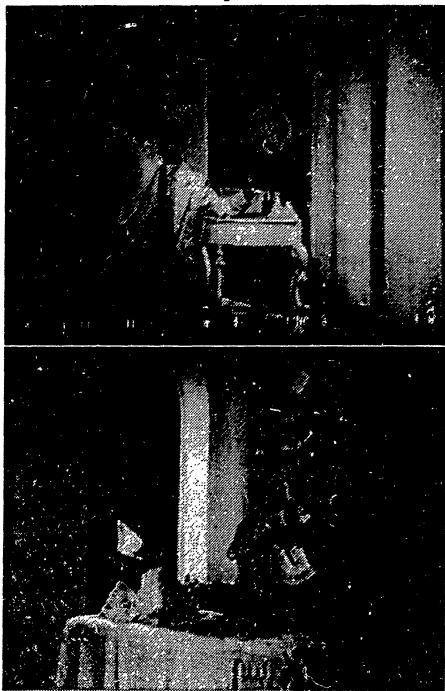


Fig. 25: Two maids - one dreaming and one scheming

Fig. 26: Clown-guests arrive: suitcase *lazzi* on full set



Fig. 27: Dr. Dapertutto confronts Dr. Dick

Fig. 28: The Leeks from Canada arrive at the Villa



Fig. 29: Dr. Dapertutto greets Seymour Bradley

Fig. 30: Stick work - Dr. Dapertutto and Thomas



**Fig. 31: A clown trio turn:
On left, Ed White from Texas (with martini glass)
Bob Leek from Canada; Bill Owen from New York**

Fig. 32: Bomb preparedness training: orchestrated by Dr. Dick; supervised by Dr. Dapertutto



**Fig. 33: Dapertutto (evil) and Pearl (goodness)
Life or death tango**

9.4 *Down North: Performing Community Ties*

In 1974, with reference to *The Farm Show* which used as its primary resource material the life of a rural community, Clinton (Ontario), Paul Thompson, founder of Theatre Passe Muraille, commented:

I don't think it's *documentary* theatre; I think it's *folk* theatre because in many cases we're not interested in *fact*. If an *emotional, exciting lie* makes better theatre and gets the point of the scene across better, then I'm more interested in the lie than the fact. We're primarily interested in making exciting theatre.³⁴

While this quotation does not refer directly to the Popular Theatre Alliance in English Canada, it does raise several issues which problematize the discourse around Popular (political) Theatre and the popular theatre traditions. These are especially relevant to how we talk about *Down North*. Should *Down North* be discursively placed in the context of **documentary** or **folk** theatre? What are the implications of each category in relation to popular theatre?

Ruth Schneider and Bev Brett have always been candid about their affiliations with the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance (CPTA) and we have seen in Chapter 3 the ties which connect CPTA to the Alternate Theatre Movement of the 1970s. These ties include the use of techniques for creating original dramas that are modelled after Passe Muraille's collective process.³⁵ Bev Brett has also made it clear that, because The Players

experienced mixed reactions when they participated in Popular Theatre workshops, *Down North* was strategically planned to be **popular** but was not intended to be **political**, in the sense of **confrontational** with respect to issues which often divide the community such as labour, resource management, or government policy.

Down North was devised using popular performance idioms similar to those John McGrath employed in his production *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* (1973). In particular, *Down North* was set inside the theatrical frame of the kitchen party or traditional **ceilidh** which, in Cape Breton as well as Scotland, has always been an occasion for telling stories, Gaelic singing and Celtic dancing to the traditional tunes of a local fiddler. *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil* was an original theatre production developed by McGrath with his 7:84 Theatre Company (Scotland) for tour in the Highlands. The *ceilidh* format proved popular with Highland audiences because it was part of their cultural heritage and spoke, with affirmation and celebration, to their particular communal ties.

In 1987, Ruth Schneider organized the third biennial festival of the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance, *Standin' the Gaff*, in Sydney (Cape Breton Island), Nova Scotia. Here Schneider and Players' director, Bev Brett, attended a workshop at which McGrath and his 7:84 Company explained their work and their process. After this workshop, the Cape

Breton company began experimenting with local performance traditions, like the *ceilidh*, in their own plays.³⁶

According to Baz Kershaw, McGrath's use of popular forms in his theatrical productions follows the cultural theory of the late Italian Marxist, Antonio Gramsci, who believed that "folklore and the popular arts could form the basis of counter-hegemonic cultural activism."³⁷ This view is also shared by Dario Fo,³⁸ another European luminary in CPTA circles, and recalls Brecht's use of popular genres and styles as well as popular performance elements such as songs, dances and slogans in his productions. In addition, when popular forms, which celebrate a rural (or peasant) culture, are incorporated into an otherwise *normal* theatre experience like *Down North*, these productions become doubly marked in terms of their political difference. They undermine not only the **elitism** of high culture but also draw attention to the bias which favours **urban** experience. At the same time, we also find that this political context can be discursively neutralized when a production is objectified by the label **folk**.³⁹

Investigating further the association with CPTA and Ruth Schneider's personal involvement in Third World cultural development projects, we find that *Down North* can also be contextualized by the term **developmental theatre** which, as a practice, is grounded in **popular education** practices. The intent of these practices is to facilitate social and political change. In 1981, popular educator, Ross Kidd, was the Canadian

spokesperson for developmental theatre work when a Third World-Canada Popular Theatre Exchange workshop was held in Thunder Bay, Ontario, to explore the techniques of Community Animation Theatre (CAT).⁴⁰ It was at this event that the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance was officially founded. In the context of developmental theatre, the principles of popular theatre are not marked by the urban/rural binary, but rather, by the words "indigenous" "identity" and "reclaiming culture." On another occasion, Kidd writes:

For all the groups theatre is a source of *identity* — a means of strengthening the spirit as a pre-condition for survival and self-defense. Their cultural heritage and cultural creativity are asserted as a way of overcoming the colonial conditioning and negative stereotypes and gaining the self-respect and self-confidence needed to confront oppression and the pressures of assimilation.⁴¹

...Defending our cultural heritage is directly linked to defending our land. Culture and politics are inseparable.⁴²

At the time when he was writing this essay, Kidd could only imagine how popular theatre workers would apply these theories to theatre production in English Canada. Even popular theatre workers have difficulty accepting the fact that not only is English Canada (its cultural practices and our ways of thinking about them) colonized by ideological narratives originating in Britain and the United States, but also that the smaller micro communities which make up English Canada, whether they are identified

by race, language, gender, sexual orientation, spiritual practices, etc., are colonized, too. They are colonized from within English Canada by hegemonic cultural practices which are sustained by the political ideals of homogeneity and sameness and are reinforced by the idea of progress and male privilege. The latter forms of cultural oppression were not lost, however, on Schneider, Brett and Ron Caplan. They saw many parallels between the aims of developmental theatre in the Third World and what they hoped to achieve in terms of reclaiming cultural difference and pride in Cape Breton.

The techniques proposed at the Thunder Bay workshop to those Popular Theatre workers who wished to practise Community Animation Theatre, included gathering, as resources for the purpose of creating staged dramas, performance customs indigenous to the participating community. In some cases, this meant revitalizing traditions which had gone underground or, as was the case with *Down North*, reaffirming the communal power of theatrical performance⁴³ as well as the validity of local performance traditions. For the Cape Breton community, these traditions included kitchen and milling parties as occasions for story-telling, Gaelic singing, Celtic reels and stepdancing to fiddle music. They also included local ceremonies and rites of passage which occurred around such events as leaving home and funerals. These are the conventions which are illustrated in the video images of *Down North* (Figs. 34-45).

The quotation by Paul Thompson draws our attention to how the theatre institution has discursively framed, within the context of the **documentary**, alternate productions which are about community life such as *The Farm Show* and *Down North*. Thompson said, however, that he would like to think of these productions as **folk**, not necessarily to emphasize their political intent but to direct us to think about the imaginative ("the emotional, exciting lie") fictional aspects of aesthetic symbolization. The idea of **documenting** a community theatrically has become the conventional mode for explaining productions such as *The Farm Show* because theoretically the actors from the collective have gathered facts from the community itself about the community's reality and then **interpreted** these (real-life) facts in performance. As the audience, the community members see themselves, their customs and their cultural reality on stage and recognize them as **authentic and truthful**.⁴⁴ We know from this dissertation that this discursive strategy is a way of **legitimizing** these alternate practices within the **economy of discourse** and allows alternate theatre practices to conform to the dominant model of the literary tradition.

In *Down North* we find the stage set arrayed with objects which are considered typical (i.e., everyday) to Cape Breton life. In her production design, Brett consciously arranges plenty of familiar objects about the stage to provide a "visual feast" for the audience.⁴⁵ In *Down North*, a wood stove

dominates the kitchen scene — the central acting area in a simultaneous set (Fig. 34) which stretches in five (5) sections across the width of the stage. The kitchen table and side board are filled with piles of tea cups and other carefully-selected domestic items. In Figures 40 and 37, flats, which designate two (2) other acting areas adjacent to but separate from the kitchen, are decorated with several portraits of ancestors and the orderly step-by-step process of making a fiddle on the "fiddler's wall," respectively. We could call these scenic props "**realistic** cultural artifacts" but, according to Brett, they are also **symbolic** of the community and the ties that bind people together. The code does not read "a specific kitchen" but a "typical Cape Breton kitchen." The Margie Gallant scenes are the most cluttered in terms of items which signify everyday life for the islander (Fig. 42). Gallant, a collector of Mother Nature's and everyone else's detritus, theatrically symbolizes the spiritual connections which bring all the neighbours and their stories together in this episodic drama. These aesthetic symbols are chosen for display because they elicit emotional, spiritual as well as intellectual responses. These are shared responses because of collective community experience.⁴⁶

Because I have suggested that folklore can be used to undermine hegemonic cultural narratives, we must acknowledge that there is an element of political subversion in *Down North* which plays against the dominant cultural images that are used especially in the tourist industry to

identify Cape Bretoners. During the Halifax run of *Down North*, one reviewer expected to see:

...checked lumberjack shirts, ball caps perched just so, and unlaced Kodiak workboots. I expected the play to be one of those 'ain't youse proud to be a Caper' shows with jokes about pogeys, piers and piles.⁴⁷

The local islanders portrayed in *Down North* are social types, composites of the people who shared their stories with Ron Caplan. Caplan, however, was "pained...because [he did not see] the *real* people [he] knew and loved but the St. Ann's Bay Players *pretending* to be these people."⁴⁸ The cast was able to create an array of familiar types through their skills in mimicry. The *persona* of the portrayed character was worn by each actor as an extension of his or her own body. No one was interested in delving into psychology or personal motivation; the focus was on social function and community experiences. Because they had several different stories to tell, many of the actors played several characters, often with only a small change in costume or a change in their vocalization. These characters, therefore, were drawn using the broad strokes of caricature; the actors consciously resisted falling into the comic distortion of parody. Every effort was made to bring to the stage in a lyrical style, the quirky sense of humour (Fig. 45) as well as toughness, resiliency and spiritual sensitivity that Brett found in

Caplan's magazine portraits.⁴⁹ Brett also found these qualities in the company as well as in her neighbours who would be The Players' audience.

The theatrical challenge when bringing these stories to performance was to work against the stasis imposed when monologue follows monologue. The play is divided into short episodes within which several stories are clustered around a thematic idea. Fiddle music and a sound track of environmental noises, which not only suggests locale but also creates the mysterious atmosphere of the spiritual world, bridge these brief scenes so that they weave in and out of each other, all around the set. The fiddler (Fig. 34, Otis Tomas) is found on stage as the audience arrives and then takes his place to the extreme stage left (Fig. 35). Often a spotlight draws the audience's attention to the fiddler as the actors arrange themselves on stage. The actors encourage the audience to clap and stomp to the fiddler's music so they can feel they are part of the festivities of the *ceilidh* (Figs. 35 and 44). At one point, early in Act I, the fiddler takes a role, telling his story in front of fiddler's wall (Fig. 37). He does not make reference to this wall in his story or try in any way to pull it realistically into the scene. The backdrop is there for display only and to act as further commentary on the stories told in front of it.

The performers tell their stories with more or less animation, depending on the caricature they are presenting. They speak directly to the audience, often making eye contact or directing a question to someone they

pick out of the audience. Sometimes they get a response which is incorporated into the performance. The actor-in-role is often involved in a task such as folding laundry or planing wood (Fig. 38), but she or he stops to share and bring the audience into the tale.

Some scenes are choreographed to include several stories in juxtaposition. Figure 38 shows a theatrical moment in which three generations are talking about their experiences in the lumber industry. They do not debate; rather, their stories are combined in a performed montage. Other episodes which involve a large number of the cast are usually overlaid with the general milling and rearrangement of the group or with changes in the music to shift the mood.

Figure 43 illustrates a scene in which the story-telling is presented in counterpoint to "Father's" dirge. The actor who plays "Father" in this scene, Murdock MacDonald, is known locally as an accomplished Gaelic singer and his traditional posture, seated with folded arms, provides background to the chorus-like remembrances of the family standing around him. This scene then builds in tempo as the cast moves toward the stories about the Sydney Iron and Ore Company and the problems which led to the burning of the company store. The ebb and flow of the play follows an underlying pulse that is established in the rhythms of language, music and sound, and is repeated and countered in choreographed as well as improvised movement and physical characterization.

Although Margie Gallant's room and the kitchen are coded with the details of everyday life, the simultaneity of the multiple set undermines any attempts at an illusion of Realism. Scenes and characters remain fluid and float with the logic of ritual from one place to another, depending on the thematic flow of the stories. In one scene, actor Michael Crimp enters in hip waders ready for fishing and walks downstage through the kitchen toward the audience, sharing his fond memories of salmon fishing. With only a slight change in lighting and some sound effects, the front of the stage transforms into the Margaree River and provides the focus as more characters enter the space to convey their fishing experiences (Fig. 41). The kitchen, wall of ancestors and fiddler's wall are all visible through the whole scene, but once the pretence is established it is not broken until the energy moves to another acting area and the transition is made to another episode. In spite of these permanent set pieces, the stage remains the indefinite space characteristic of ritual enactment. Another example of this theatrical effect is illustrated in Figure 39: "Lexie leaves home." Wearing a rural house dress of no particular vintage, "Lexie" is discovered in a single spotlight; she remembers herself as a young girl teasing her brother. In a second spot, "young Lexie" appears in an old-style dress. Older "Lexie" then becomes her own mother and plays out a poignant leaving home scene with her younger self.

Down North also presents a sense of ritual timelessness; as we have seen in the Lexie scene, characters appear together in old-fashion and modern dress, an anachronism that is marked in the chronology as a popular convention.⁶⁰ In the salmon fishing scene, Crimp talks of the past and then enters a timeless present as others arrive on the scene. The pattern of the drama is cyclical, returning again and again to the fiddler, to the *ceilidh*, and to Margie Gallant. Margie not only symbolizes spirituality, she also plays the role of wise woman or crone as she shamanistically leads us through this allegorical ritual of communal healing accompanied by the haunting music of the fiddler.

To call this theatre *documentary* is to miss the significance of imaginary fictiveness, which Paul Thompson likes to think of as *folk*, and to miss the role theatrical symbolization fills when the community is at play. In *Down North*, the allegory is possibly about **the timelessness of community experience: through pain and pleasure, tragedy and happy times, community survival is ensured because of the resourcefulness of the Cape Breton spirit and the community's resilience. As well, their survival is ensured because of their self-reliance which is grounded in a belief in the power of natural (and supernatural) forces such as love.**

Down North

By Ronald Caplan and Ruth Schneider
 Directed by Bev Brett

Cast
 in order of appearance

- *Wanda MacDonald*
- *Judith Fuller*
- *Otis Tomas*
- *Michael Crimp*
- *John Graham MacInnes*
- *Johanna Padelt*
- *Murdoch MacDonald*
- *Bev Brett*
- *Heather MacInnes*
- *Barbara Longua*
- *Carol Kennedy*

Technical

Lights	<i>Steve Grose</i>
Sound	<i>Bert Ottinger</i>
Costumes	<i>Barbara Longua</i>
Set Design	<i>Bev Brett</i>
Poster Design	<i>Carol Kennedy</i>
Light and Sound Design	<i>Steve Grose</i>

Fig. 34: Audience takes seats: fiddler plays seated at kitchen table central to multi-location set

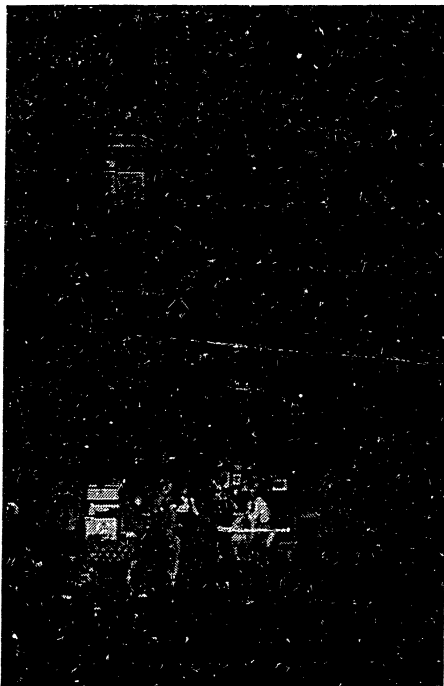


Fig. 35: *Ceilidh* - the kitchen party; fiddler's station stage left

Fig. 36: One woman's story: domestic symbols of Cape Breton life



Fig. 37: Fiddler takes a role in front of fiddler's wall isolated by spotlight

Fig. 38: Three generations: three stories about lumbering

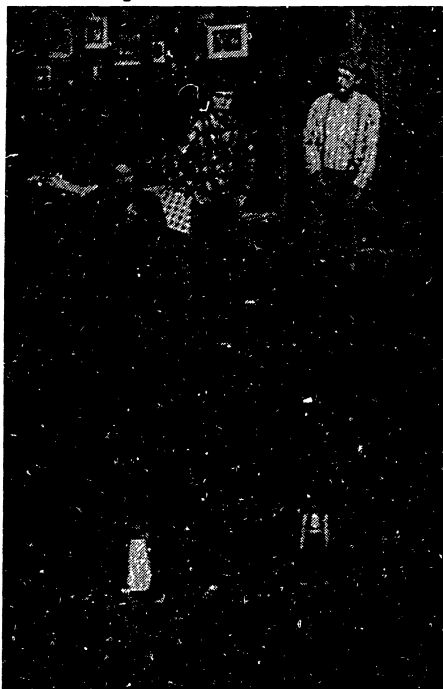


Fig. 39: Lexie leaves home - flashback
Older Lexie, in role as her mother, talks
to younger self

Fig. 40: Ancestor wall: what it was like to go to work in the States to support the family

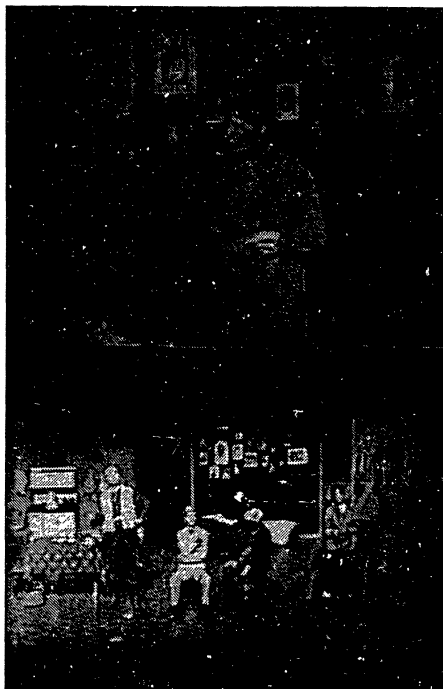


Fig. 41: Fishing the Margaree River

Fig. 42: Margie Gallant: the spiritual connection

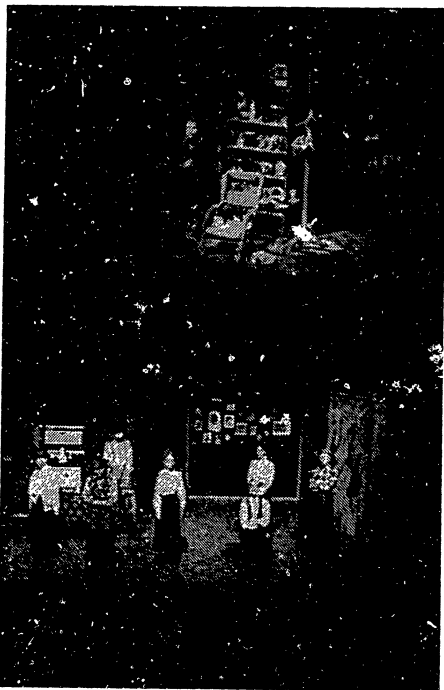


Fig. 43: Father's dirge: the family remembers

Fig. 44: The *ceilidh* returns interspersed with stories about cures

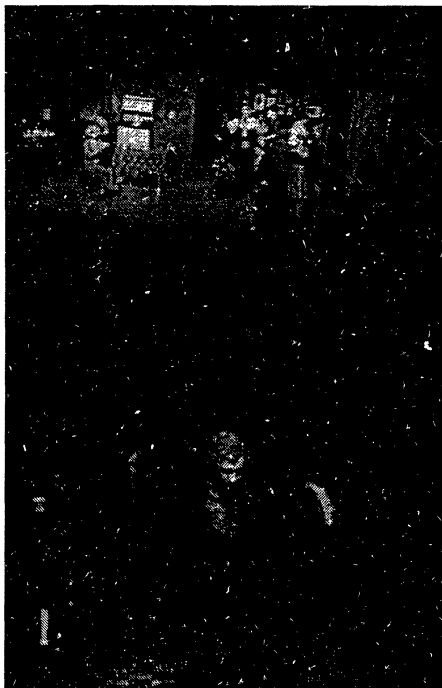


Fig. 45: Comic turn: the farting corpse

ENDNOTES

¹ All three productions were designed and staged according to end stage, proscenium architectural requirements allowing us to assume from the outset that the occasion for the theatrical performance would conform to the literary model.

I saw *Tears of a Dinosaur* at the Edmonton Fringe Festival which, as an occasion for theatre, offers the audience-participant the popular experiences of a fairground. In hindsight I would have expected this context to influence the dramatic performance, but this was not the case. The Fringe afforded some laxity to traditional decorum but the rules against food and drink and smoking were generally observed. As well, there was a clear separation between stage and audience because this show was designed for tour in conventional venues in other cities. At the same Fringe Festival, I attended a cabaret-style performance by a comedian/improviser and the metatheatrical elements as well as interchanges between the audience and the performer were clearly coded so that we were to read this as "popular theatre." Obviously the Fringe Festival format is able to accommodate the conventions of the literary theatre event as well as the popular. Perhaps this was also the case with fairs in England in the days of such theatre impresarios as Master Richardson. See Sybil Rosenfeld, "Master Richardson - 'The Great Showman'," pp. 105-22; appears in Appendix B under 1825.

² In general, company members could not identify the source of the problems they were experiencing with the theatre and other cultural institutions, in particular with critics and reviewers who tend to influence public opinion and perception. In fact, these Second Wave practitioners were perplexed because, while they received financial affirmation as well as audience support and their work was praised by their peers, critics failed to demonstrate an appreciation for what these companies were attempting to achieve in their productions. Because theatremaking using improvisation is accepted (coded "normal") practice which can, in the final analysis, generate a playscript and these companies are able to represent their companies on paper as conforming to the corporate (coded "normal") model, it is not surprising that critics perceive of these productions as conforming to the literary (coded "normal") model.

³ Gombrich, p. 11.

⁴ There are other rhetorical biases in Gombrich's citation to which the reader may be alerted. I have not pointed them out because my focus is on the processes of aesthetic perception.

⁵ Because of this affiliation, *Down North* was considered by Ruth Schneider to be **Popular Theatre** (politically oriented). At the same time, the metatheatrical conventions of the production bear the marks of **literary theatre**. This ambivalence is clarified by Bev Brett when she explains that the company had mixed reactions to previous Popular Theatre workshops while they all enjoyed participating in earlier more conventional, text-based events. This desire to present *Down North* in a more conventional light informed their own discourse. The idea of **popular theatre** was never considered with respect to this production.

I think it is safe to surmise that the politics of the show were underplayed and, because writers generated the initial text, there was nothing to suggest that this could not be literary theatre. Popular performance elements were evident in the production from the outset but no one, including myself, suggested, until I started writing this dissertation, that popular conventions facilitated the staging of these stories about Cape Breton life.

⁶ Kershaw, p. 148.

⁷ Kershaw uses this idea of traditional performance customs to develop the argument that they "authenticate" the play so local audiences engage more readily in the performance (pp. 152-57). This may be true; however, in view of the imperative in literary theatre to establish a frame of truth-telling, I have strategically avoided identifying these conventions as "authenticating." I believe they can have several levels of cultural significance for a community, including the clear signal that this is ritual "play time" and not "work time."

⁸ I maintain that the semiotics of colour are very pertinent when we make meaning of a performance. Colour coding is marked in the chronology, Appendix B, from the earliest entries. Of course, we are all familiar with the significance of white and black and red (the sacred colours of the goddess) which were recoded in patriarchal religions. Too little attention is paid to the significance of colour in theatre productions. Unfortunately, I am unable to pursue this avenue further in this study with regard to the three sample productions.

⁹ It is interesting to note that the use of puppets in this production is significantly understated in the collection of reviews.

¹⁰ Schumann, "The Radicality of Puppet Theatre," pp. 75-83. Schumann maintains that there are "ties to shamanistic healing" that are channelled when puppetry is used in performance (p. 75). Also, see Schumann, "The

Bread and Puppet Theatre in Nicaragua, 1985," pp. 3-7; Bell, "The Bread and Puppet Theatre in Nicaragua, 1987," pp. 8-22.

¹¹ Intellectually this seems far-fetched but experience proves otherwise. See David Freeberg, *The Power of Images: Studies in the History and Theory of Response* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1989).

¹² Mitchell and Leys, p. 8 and Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, p. 132; appear in Appendix B under 597.

¹³ Chambers, *The Mediaeval Stage, Vol. I*, pp. 256-59; appears in Appendix B under **Keltic and Teutonic Customs: Village Festival Practices and Rites of Sacrifice**.

¹⁴ Hardison, p. 254; appears in Appendix B under 1176.

¹⁵ McKechnie, p. 73; appears in Appendix B under 1660. Other entries can be traced using "Punch" in conjunction with the computer's search function.

¹⁶ Speaight, pp. 111-14; appears in Appendix B under 1766 and 1773.

¹⁷ "Note on Puppets" (p. 5) in Max von Boehn, *Dolls and Puppets*, Josephine Nicholl (Trans.) (New York: Cooper Square Publishers, 1966). (*Italics mine*).

¹⁸ In *The History of the English Puppet Theatre*, Speaight wrote:

The puppet theatre has not always been a children's theatre, but it has always been the theatre of the people. The wealthy and the sophisticated too have loved the puppets, but as a light diversion or a passing fancy; their elemental appeal has always found an enduring response from the simple and the pure in heart, from peasants and labourers, from artists and poets, from the child-like spirit in man (p. 11).

¹⁹ For further information on Christmann's background and performance training, see Mark Christmann, Tanja Jacobs, David Wright, "Dialogue on Training," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Spring 1994), pp. 8-12.

²⁰ Allardyce Nicoll, *The World of Harlequin* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1963), pp. 40-41.

²¹ This caused considerable confusion for Ray Conlogue, critic for the *Globe and Mail*, because the literary narrative, especially the dramatic conflict which involved Doctor Dapertutto, could not be "developed" to any degree of intellectual satisfaction when so much performance time and space was devoted to dance and *lazzi*. Conlogue, "Theatre Columbus plays with fire," *Globe and Mail* (no date, company files).

²² Meisel describes pantomime abstractly in terms of the strategic use of "movement and light, colour and change, wonder that was not mimetic and material, but magical and atmospheric" (p. 185).

²³ Meisel, p. 185.

²⁴ Conlogue's review.

²⁵ Fletcher, p. 356.

²⁶ These roles can be traced in the chronology (Appendix B), using the search function. The chronology suggests that the character of Doctor Faustus was introduced to English audiences by Marlowe in his play of the same name. However, I would maintain that this role was familiar to English people and became popular because the character as emblem for magician/scholar/chemist was already part of the popular tradition prior to Marlowe's play. See Hattaway, pp. 160-185; appears in Appendix B under 1592.

²⁷ See Appendix B under 1813.

²⁸ Beaumont, p. 112.

²⁹ I have written elsewhere about the conventional costume codes associated with clown duos descended from Harlequin and Clown and their significance as cultural signs of social function. See Barbara Drennan, "Mump and Smoot...with Wog: Clowns for a Fin de Siècle," *Canadian Theatre Review* (Summer 1991), pp. 32-36.

³⁰ Further consideration of this doubling in terms of the theory of theatrical presentation is offered by Bernard Beckerman, p. 34.

³¹ This is especially interesting to trace in the chronology by searching out the entries for "Tarlton" "Kemp" and "Armin," Shakespeare's three clown actors.

³² Meisel describes pantomime staging as "pictures unfolding in time and space" (p. 98). In an interview, Glenn Davidson, the designer of *Daper-tutto*, used one word to describe how he hoped these pictures would be read: "exotic." (Telephone interview, March 11, 1991).

³³ This is the storyline which is mentioned in most reviews.

³⁴ Quoted in Johnston, *Up the Mainstream*, pp. 120-21.

³⁵ In her application to The Canada Council Explorations, Ruth Schneider cited *Paper Wheat* (25th Street Theatre, Saskatoon, 1977) as an example of the type of community collective production The Players were hoping to develop in the *Down North* project. The process used for creating *Paper Wheat* "was similar to that developed by Paul Thompson for *The Farm Show*." Thompson had directed a revue for the 25th Street Theatre's 1976-77 season using his techniques for collective creation. This experience turned the Saskatoon company on to the exciting possibilities of the process (Filewod, *Collective Encounters*, p. 90).

³⁶ The first script submitted to The Canada Council Explorations by Schneider uses the "milling frolic" as the occasion for telling stories and singing Gaelic songs. This type of community house party involves a large milling board around which neighbours take a seat and collectively "mill" (pound) blankets, while favourite stories are told and the old songs are sung in Gaelic. This is a way of passing down and preserving the Gaelic language and heritage. In the final version of *Down North*, the milling party idea was changed to the *ceilidh*. I assume this was because the latter involved more physical movement such as dancing (see Caplan, "A Milling Frolic on the North Shore," *Down North: The Book of Cape Breton's Magazine*, pp. 18-24).

³⁷ Kershaw, p. 153. Other texts written by McGrath are included in the bibliography.

³⁸ See Dario Fo, "Some Aspects of Popular Theatre" in *New Theatre Quarterly*, 1(2), (May 1985), pp. 131-37.

³⁹ In *Reading the Popular* (London: Routledge, 1989), John Fiske points out that the label "folk" can legitimate cultural practices by implying that the products produced are more "authentic" because they are not tainted by commercial mass production methods and that they are more "original" in the sense that their aesthetic rules are purer because they have not been contaminated by learned aesthetics from cultures outside the tribal unit (p. 5). Also, see Mukerji and Schudson, "Introduction" (p. 3).

⁴⁰ Dickson Mwansa and Ross Kidd, "We'll Turn the Whole World Bottoms Up: A Report on The Third World-Canada Popular Theatre Exchange: Thunder Bay Workshop in Community Animation Theatre (CAT)," unpublished, 1981, Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance files held by the Popular Theatre Alliance Manitoba in Winnipeg.

⁴¹ Ross Kidd, "Reclaiming Culture," in *FUSE*, (January/February 1983), p. 269.

⁴² Statement made by Shuar Indian, a member of the CAT performers from Ecuador, quoted in Kidd, p. 272.

⁴³ Bev Brett writes that when she formed St. Ann's Bay Players, actors and audiences remembered that there had been playmaking in the community years before when television and movies were not entertainment options because people did not have electricity or easy transportation.

⁴⁴ In English Canada, this discursive strategy is employed by Alan Filewod and Diane Bessai in their respective texts about productions which originated with the Alternate Theatre Movement in the 1970s. In an international context, this is also the discursive strategy which Baz Kershaw uses with reference to *The Cheviot, the Stag and the Black, Black Oil*, see footnote #7 above.

⁴⁵ Correspondence.

⁴⁶ I do not mean to suggest that audience members would not have an individual response to these visual symbols. The traditional kitchen wood stove could hold unhappy memories for an audience member or the crocheted afghan on the daybed could read "tacky and too down home" to someone else. This does not negate, however, Brett's intent to elicit shared responses. These aesthetic choices are coded "familiar" and "Cape Breton."

⁴⁷ Sara Holland, "Down North: St. Ann's Bay Players" in *Callboard* (Nova Scotia Drama League), XXXVI(4), (May-December 1989), p. 35.

⁴⁸ This process of creating new characters by the performers from the materials they were given by the writers, director and their research and physical limitations was described by Bev Brett in her correspondence to me. The exception was Margie Gallant; the actress was so successful at capturing the spirit of Margie that several relatives and people who had known her were eager to share their personal remembrances of the real person

with the cast. Note the irony of Caplan's attitude in the context of the negotiation between popular and literary traditions (Italics mine).

⁴⁹ Caplan, see Chapter 2, footnote #40.

⁵⁰ Wickham, *The Medieval Theatre*, pp. 74-79; appears in Appendix B under 1377.

CHAPTER 10

**CONCLUDING NEGOTIATIONS:
RETHINKING ENGLISH-CANADIAN THEATRE
IN THE CONTEXT OF POSTMODERNISM
AND POSTCOLONIALISM****10.0 Introduction**

I have formulated my conclusions by asking two contextual questions which will focus the significance of this research around issues that I believe are relevant in terms of theatre history. The first issue has been alluded to in the body of this dissertation and places this study within the debate around the political intentions of those whose practices could be considered **postmodern**. The second question places this research in the context of the **postcolonial** debate, which seeks to address English-Canadian cultural ties to Britain.

10.1 The Postmodern Context¹

Do these Second Wave Alternate productions pose a political challenge to the ruling hegemonic structures and, if so, how do the performance choices in these productions undermine the status quo?

In the 1970s, the Alternate Theatre Movement laid the ground work for a theatre practice in English Canada that could speak to social and political change. In some cases, the content of their productions directly

challenged dominant ideologies. As we have seen, however, the institutionalization of alternative theatre practice effectively absorbed these companies into the theatrical mainstream so that the challenge they posed was neutralized. In the case of the radical Mummers Troupe, funding was discontinued which eliminated them from the theatrical scene, although company members went on to work in other organizations such as the Canadian Popular Theatre Alliance.

What was left within the theatre institution was a structural category which could be accessed if playwrights were willing to conform to the corporate model when setting up their companies. This provided an opportunity for One Yellow Rabbit and Theatre Columbus to establish a presence with The Canada Council and for the amateur group, St. Ann's Bay Players to find funding for their production, *Down North* with The Canada Council's Explorations program. On paper, these companies **appear** to follow the conventional norms of the literary theatre by modelling themselves after corporations, therefore **indicating** that they operate in a fiscally responsible manner. Their promotional material would indicate, as well, that they are concerned with making theatre which is derived from a dramatic play-text and adheres to the production model of the literary tradition. Significant, too, is the fact that these companies **seem** to follow the normalized conventions for the theatre of illusion. For example, the productions I studied do not appear to break from the conventions imposed

by the proscenium structure. The stage area is architecturally separated from the audience members who sit rigidly facing front. The pictorial frame is traditionally respected as the means by which the audience can willingly suspend disbelief and read the production as unfolding in a linear manner before them.

It is apparent, however, from my interviews and from the video recordings of these three productions that the processes followed for making these theatre games were different from those that are followed when theatre is considered the **interpretation** of a set of textual givens, and that these plays do not strictly adhere to literary conventions. Because these companies construct their identity as conforming to the status quo and, yet, simultaneously perform an alternate aesthetic, I believe we can describe them as practising a **politics of resistance**, a subtle dance of postmodern **negotiation**. Whether we can call these companies **subversive** is another issue. I would suggest that subversion can also be subtle; it does not have to be directly confrontational. In the context of postmodernism, I would expect to find the politics of subversion to be performed playfully as part of the process of negotiation between two binary structures.

Popular forms undermine the hegemonic dominance of select theatrical traditions. Incorporating popular traditions is a politically subversive act because it calls into question those processes and structures which control theatre production in English Canada. As a strategy for play

production, it serves to critique the system of making subsidized theatre while staying within that system. This political transgression against the hegemonic norm is playful but it creates an anxiety within the cultural establishment that keeps these companies from breaking free of their labels as **small theatres** and keeps the public's investment in their aesthetic practice within contained limits.

It is important to recall that these companies do not separate their theatre events from their context as social occasions; audiences are considered an integral part of the aesthetic production, which is a mark of the popular tradition. These playmakers are concerned with quality and production values as well as maintaining the integrity of their theatre **craft**. They consider themselves **artists**; yet, they resist objectifying their theatre productions as **art**. This language would be too highbrow and elitist for their audiences and would only serve to detach the play from its context. According to these Second Wave theatre practitioners, their purpose is to **entertain** by offering something unusual or different that is also accessible, not because it is conventional or easy to decode but because it is playful and overtly theatrical.

The postmodern negotiation which these productions perform is the strategic play between the literary tradition to which they seemingly adhere and the popular tradition which I have identified as informing their theatrical choices. This is a manifestation of the postmodern blur between

high art and popular forms which critics have isolated as signifying the postmodern style. Often this commentary has taken the form of denigration because the inclusion of elements of popular or **mass culture** in aesthetic works can undermine the transcendent quality which supposedly marks "good" or "mature art." Transcendence in these critics' terms is seen as timeless and apolitical.

Including popular forms and practices, which are culturally associated with illegitimacy, in English-Canadian theatre productions problematizes the territory around the designation of **not-for-profit** theatre that is subsidized by funding agencies such as The Canada Council. These agencies are founded upon principles that would have theatre practitioners aspire to producing "good or mature art" as defined by cultural narratives that adhere to the metanarrative, **liberal humanism**. This metanarrative, which I have associated with the cultural theories prescribed by Matthew Arnold, reinforces the dominion of the literary playscript when the aesthetic practice in question is theatre.

10.2 The Postcolonial Context²

How do I justify attempts to incorporate theatrical practices that enmesh English Canadians even more in the traditions and ideologies of the colonizing nation? What is my responsibility as a white Anglo-Canadian in a white settler colony if I desire to raise the collective consciousness about the on-going colonization of our cultural practices?

I do not desire to imitate the colonizer and yet I see theatrical traditions being used which, when using our conventional rhetorical constructions, cannot be discussed without trivialization. I seem to be caught inside a paradox of my own making.

In this study, I have sought to bring to light many of the authenticating conventions which discursively reinforce the cultural metanarrative that keeps Matthew Arnold's idea of **culture** dominant in our institutions. The operative binary in Arnold's argument suggests that a society which does not adhere to the totalizing vision of culture as **edification** is willing to embrace something other than universal social order and will inevitably subject the country to **anarchy**. This agenda is political and recalls the fifteenth-century directive for "imposing a uniform pattern of life and thought on the country" and by extension, I would add, "or the colonized Empire."

A sign of this uniformity has been our conventional investment in the importance of developing a stage voice, which we call **mid-Atlantic** but which is really a variation on the received British pronunciation that signifies a performed character that is **educated** and **cultured**. Speech standards reflect social standards. When we aspire towards presenting a universally approved vocalization, we are also aspiring to represent onstage characters whose lives, career ambitions, values and ideology have also been approved as socially correct.

In the context of postmodernism, I have said that the ideology inherent in Arnold's hegemonic paradigm **orders** and **regulates** aesthetic practices because it selectively valorizes certain theatrical traditions over others. Some performance strategies and forms are deemed **legitimate** or normal **theatre**, while others are considered **illegitimate** or **para-theatrical**. By adhering to the normative expectations and attitudes toward theatre practice imposed upon us by virtue of our colonization, we perpetuate our colonial relationship to the dominant power and continue to be caught in the colonial web of our heritage.

The postmodern play between the literary and popular traditions in Second Wave theatre events performs a dual political gest. This strategy problematizes the normative processes for making subsidized theatre events in English Canada. It also problematizes our discourse about theatre practice, a discourse which locks us into colonial attitudes concerning the relationship between cultural practices and society. These attitudes are informed by the inherited collective fear that letting go of control mechanisms will lead to social chaos or anarchy, that repression is a necessary condition of survival.

In terms of the big picture, the political issue concerns control over the symbolic environment which constructs collective and individual identity and presents us with images of our reality: Who is in control and what or whose interests do they serve? In terms of the issue more immediate to this

dissertation: What or who is being controlled by the attitudes we hold and the values that have been assigned to popular theatre?

As I have indicated, the popular theatre has never been erased but has been marked by pejorative terminologies that link these practices to savage or unruly behaviour, escapism and naive childishness, feminine frivolity, excessive emotionalism and sensuality, and sexual ribaldry inherent in the unthinking mob or vulgar masses. The appeal to civilized behaviour and civilization in general would have us reject popular traditions in favour of the more serious, intellectual, educational or uplifting theatre practices which centre around the interpretation of a literary dramatic text.

In this dissertation, I addressed the gradual harnessing, in the name of social order, of the potentially subversive energy of theatrical practices. This was a program of systematic neutralization which began, it seems, with the arrival of the Christian missionaries and continues with our investment in the values of high art and Arnoldian liberal humanism. We know about popular practices because of the vociferous objections made by those in authority against those who participated in transformative performance customs. This anxiety and censure resulted in the legislated control over the freedom to wear masks and other costume disguises as well as over physical mimicry such as imitating voices, posture and gestures. These practices had proven disruptive to those who were attempting to hold on to power and influence and therefore it was in the public interest, so it

was said, to confine these practices to regulated performance sites and occasions. Eventually, theatrical mediation was assigned a neutral politic by being detached from its social function as a mass medium and community ritual.

In the instance of clowning practices, there has been a concerted effort to present this theatrical form as socially benign and contained within an image of the innocent fun of pantomime or circus. Popular traditions, critics tell us, are fundamentally **conservative** and **escapist**, although it is acknowledged that popular forms do have social purpose in that they provide comic relief for some sentimental adults and naive children. We can, however, read the coded semiotics of clowns as performed signs which offer social critique but to do so, we must practise resistance and read against the grain of conventional patterns of thought. I maintain that the social function of clown is analogous to that of trickster in Native cultures, where it is acknowledged that the theatrical presence/absence of trickster disrupts standardized behaviour in order to create chaos and cause people to re-evaluate social structures, taboos and values. This social function has been neutralized in polite white societies that systematically mask violence and other emotional behaviours with social decorum.

Control of the mimetic instinct by institutionalizing and regulating theatrical practices in the name of civilized behaviour and art has created a colonized **other** which is, in fact, ourselves. We perpetuate this

colonialization by adhering blindly to a doctrine which neutralizes our instinctive behaviour to play and pretend mimetically.

Arnold and his cultural agents in English Canada maintain that all aesthetic practices belong within the domain of **leisure** activities. This attitude discriminates against those who **work**, who belong to the working class, or who like to work at playing or play at working. The political implications of this bias must now be obvious to the reader. In English Canada in the 1930s, we first experimented with working-class theatres that were overtly leftwing in their politics and therefore remained isolated from the mainstream in terms of theatrical resources. The majority of people work in English Canada; they also look for engaging and entertaining activities in which to participate. Do we have to be "leisured" to participate in theatrical activities? With our attitude toward the making of theatre in Canada, could we ever find ourselves with a theatre that is as "popular as bowling"? It does not seem probable and yet some theatrical activities such as megamusicals and rodeos attract large audiences from all classes; they are popular. It is certainly time to rethink what popular theatre is in English Canada and what audiences find **entertaining**.

The **garrisc.n mentality**, which we are told dominates English-Canadian cultural attitudes, is an image of ourselves which we have created and perpetuated. This image also keeps our idea of ourselves inside a paternalistic mindset that arises from a fear that people cannot control their

natural instincts and therefore the mind is valued above the body and spirit. We will become the wild men or wild women of Medieval iconography unless we build walls of civilized order within which to contain ourselves. We continue to colonize ourselves by recycling the cultural narratives which discriminate against mimicry and play, the fundamental principles of popular performance.

10.3 Negotiating Terms: A Review

It was my intention in this dissertation to perform an examination of the way we talk/think about theatre in English Canada in order to come to terms with some of the differences which I perceived in Second Wave Alternate theatre productions, in particular, *Tears of a Dinosaur*, *Doctor Dapertutto* and *Down North*. From the outset, I recognized that this would be an ambitious undertaking because I had to consider not only the making of these different theatre events but also the writing of theatre history in English Canada and the privilege that traditional theatre histories about English-language theatre give to certain theatre practices.

Much of what I presented in this study has been contingent upon constructing a theoretical foundation which addresses conventional notions of theatre and theatre history. Because I am aware that those who will read this dissertation may not be familiar with many of the recent attempts to rethink how people construct reality using the various media as systems of

representation, I have framed this study within the activity of **negotiation**. In doing so, I hope that those who have never self-consciously thought about their own theoretical orientation can now recognize the significance of identifying conventional assumptions and points of reference. Assumptions and reference points are coded in all discourse and are enmeshed with ideology which has become normalized so as to seem invisible.

To detach my own thinking, which is also engrained with institutionalized ideas of what is normal theatre practice and the conventions of theatre discourse, I offered the reader a paradigm for theatremaking which is based on the game model structured as a matrix of rules. I found during the course of my research that this notion of theatre as game was conventional in English-language theatre up to Jacobean times. Glynne Wickham repeatedly called for a reconsideration of the significance of game and play when thinking about pre-Christian, Medieval and Elizabethan performance traditions.³ I suggest that acknowledging the seriousness of game and play and incorporating these concepts into contemporary discourse would open cultural studies to acknowledge that the **transformative performance mode** — that is, **theatre as play** in the **as if** whether realized on stage or not — holds a primary place in all human endeavour. This is a bold statement but one which begins to explain why we can truly speak of theatre as **magic**.

Crucial to my rethinking theatre as game is the awareness that theatre practice is an aesthetic process that organizes perception semiotically; that is, that theatre images mediate experience symbolically for the purpose of social communication. As with any information system which makes meaning within a context and in this case, within the context of the social occasion of the theatre event, success relies as much on the competence of the receiver-decoder, as on the effects created by the sender-coder. The medium of theatre is structured by conventions or codes which, whether they are familiar or novel to the audience, organize the drama as **rules** followed during **the playing out** of the game. These rules, which represent aesthetic choices, determine how the performance space and theatrical image clusters are to be used to make meaning. Performed theatre forms are read as theatre signs and their meaning can be construed because they are derived directly or bisociatively from a given set of **theatrical traditions**.

Traditions are antecedent forms which accumulate over time and yet undergo change because gamemakers adapt them to suit their specific theatrical purposes. English pantomime, for instance, has antecedents in French fairground entertainments of the late seventeenth century. These different theatrical forms found their way to England because of the migration of French actors, exiled from their own country.⁴ As well, historians have been able to identify elements of English opera, masque,

folk farce, *commedia dell'arte* and vaudeville-like song and dance in English pantomime. Pantomime, therefore, was a performance genre unique to English-speaking theatre which carried traces of conventions foreign to its audience as well as conventions which were familiar. Audiences were attracted to the form because of its novelty but were able to make meaning because many of the rules were recognizable and made theatrical sense.

Traditions are housed in the perceptual register which I call the **theatrical imaginary**; they playfully reside there as impressions of theatrical concepts, experiences and potential theatrical forms. My theatrical imaginary expands with my exposure to theatrical forms and traditions. By participating in theatre events in my own and other languages, by experimenting practically with theatre images and exploring the possibilities of the medium of performance, by learning about production techniques, by studying all performance traditions outside and inside my own ethnic sphere, by researching past theatre events and their antecedents, and by training with experienced practitioners, I can broaden my scope of theatrical possibilities. Experiences with other media such as film and TV or with disciplines such as dance and music can also inform my theatrical imaginary as I consider how these systems can be adapted to serve theatrical performance. Limiting my exposure to theatre forms and conventions, in particular, neglecting the study of performance traditions which are taught as **Theatre History**, will only limit my potential to use

the theatre medium whether I am producing meaning on the stage by devising theatrical effects or in the audience by interpreting what the performed image clusters mean to me socially and personally.

Remodelling the idea of theatre allowed me to sever my thinking from the common assumption that theatre practice is an **interpretation** of dramatic literature and therefore dependent upon literary poesis. Early in this dissertation (1.1) I asked the reader to reconsider the usefulness of the Aristotelian definition of drama as **agon** or **conflict** and to think, instead, of drama as **tension** which can be conveyed in nonverbal signs such as music, light, colour, rhythm, etc. When we reframe drama as tension spectacle then becomes an integral component in theatre semiosis, rather than being considered of lesser significance or of lesser dramatic value than the performed word. This reframing represents a major shift in conventional thought; it destabilizes the bias against spectacle — the mark of theatricality — which we received from our ancestors along with the traditions of our theatrical practice. Destabilization of conventional thought about theatre practice opens our discourse to a consideration of theatre productions which are performance- or image-oriented rather than text-oriented. What I am advocating here is the possibility of talking about a theatrical rather than a literary **dramaturgy**, a dramaturgy that, when mediating the dramatic idea, addresses stage and performance effects rather than the effects of words alone.

In negotiating the terms used to articulate theatre practice, I also devised a method for examining our discourse about theatre using the post-structuralist procedure known as **deconstruction**. This method facilitated the identification of certain conventions which authenticate our theatre history narratives so that we accept them as truthful. These conventions are supported by vocabularies which I was able to mark for patterns of repetition and similarity. We recognize these conventions and vocabularies as familiar; thus they seem normal and transparent. We usually do not realize that they carry ideological implications because they represent acts of social gest. Conventions and vocabularies formalize our **common knowledge** about theatre which, in fact, is selective and therefore inherently biased.

We order our thinking about theatre in terms of binary relationships ("is"/"is not") because binaries form the basis of logical argument. Therefore, some theatre practices are categorized as typical because they are similar to what is considered **normal**, while some are called different or **other**. Often these different practices are designated as falling **outside** normal theatre and therefore, are **paratheatrical**.

As I have pointed out above with regard to the bias against spectacle, our conventional thinking is received; it is passed down as part of our collective English-language theatrical imaginary. We have inherited discursive ideas about theatre along with our colonized cultural territory. Consequently, as English Canadians we have aligned our thinking about

normal theatre and paratheatrical practices with the imperial politics of a **legitimate** theatre (the **literary tradition**) and an **illegitimate** theatre (the **popular tradition**), respectively. The **literary** theatre was derived through the process of bisociation from the "popular" traditions which were already in place. The literary theatre represents theatre games which follow a certain set of game rules. These rules were valorized by those who held influence over theatrical resources and legislative power over the occasion for theatre so that they seemed to be more significant. Today these rules dominate and direct our ideas about valid theatre games and their aesthetics.

I submit that **popular** theatre should be recognized as the basis of all theatrical performance. Popular theatre has historically been marked by derogatory terms because, as an aesthetic practice, it cannot be ignored or erased, although it can be kept in a marginalized cultural space. The popular tradition is performance rather than text-based and therefore as a cultural product it is **ephemeral** and not easily controlled or censored. The source of its influence as a communication tool cannot be eliminated but its power can be socially neutralized with persistent discursive denigration. Popular theatre is consistently described as **theatrical**. It seems to me that theatricality should be a fundamental consideration in all **theatre** events and yet, when I examined theatre discourse, I found theatricality to be a mark of devaluation and trivialization.

Problems arise when I try to talk in conventional terms about theatre games such as the three I chose to study from the Second Wave Alternate. These productions beg to be taken seriously but are not clearly marked as literary and therefore defy normalized terms of reference. These theatre games convey drama using physical performance rather than narrative development. These dramatic productions were derived collectively using techniques of theatrical poesis or **improvisation** rather than by a single author writing a playscript. As a result, the emphasis in these plays is on communicating ideas through the use of stage effects and they are marked stylistically by a focus on spectacle, theatricalism, physicality or on combinations of performed audio-visual images. Puppets and clowning, dance and music have been incorporated in these performances in unique ways. My research indicated that, during the process of making these theatre games, the playwrights realized that when the written words — the dialogue or debate — were allowed to dominate, the result was **deadly** theatre. Deadly theatre fails to **entertain** and therefore loses its audience as co-creators in the theatre event.

In order to have the terms of reference to talk about the three Second Wave theatre productions in the context of the English-speaking popular tradition, I devised five performances on paper which allowed me to identify various aspects of popular practices. In these performances I marked the popular tradition in terms of:

- 1) selected quotations;
- 2) definition;
- 3) chronology of recorded traditions;
- 4) a model of the event;
- 5) conventions of theatrical dramaturgy.

I then used this information as an interpretive framework for a sixth performance in which I discussed *Tears of a Dinosaur*, *Doctor Dapertutto* and *Down North* as popular theatre events.

10.4 Negotiating Conclusions: Resisting Closure

Throughout the course of this research, I have taken note of the anxiety which is evident in the discourse about popular forms. In recent studies on aesthetic practices which consider the postmodern blur that incorporates mass media and popular culture into that venerable site once reserved for high art and elitist culture, we read that inevitably we will be engulfed by technological dehumanization, sentimental nostalgia for kitsch, illiteracy, as well as lower aesthetic standards and sensibilities. The overriding objection made against validating popular culture, however, seems to be the strategic move in artistic circles toward entering the realm of commercial success, into the realm of **entertainment**, even when the issue is survival. Can theatre practitioners think of themselves as both **artists** and **entertainers**?

Popular appeal, I maintain, hinges upon two ideas: **democratic appeal** and the notion of **jouissance**. Democratic appeal leads me to think about egalitarian concerns, people's interests, the play between communal or in-common needs and individual or particular needs. In terms of theatre, democratic appeal connotes the idea of the audience and the performers as a creative unit producing meaning and appreciating the efficacy of this social ritual by virtue of their individual ties to community. Democratic appeal **entertains** because no participant in the theatre event feels alienated; but rather, is **held** (*tenir*, to hold) inside the liminal time and space in the context of the theatrical occasion.

Jouissance is a word I used early in this study; it means **bliss** with overtones of **sexual pleasure-pain**. Jouissance leads me to think of the sublime, ecstasy, exhilaration and exuberance as well as angst, melancholy, being in a state of crisis or on the edge. It connotes the idea of an out-of-body experience, not being in the everyday, of being transported beyond reality within the orgiastic party-feeling of carnival, masquerade or playing pretend. Jouissance brings to mind wonder and awe, the ambivalence of simultaneous fear and attraction, of aura and magic, charm and reverence. I think of the spectacular, fantastic, fascinating, dazzling and amazing! I remember the thrill of a performed whole-sensory experience. These words can be and are applied to theatre events. Jouissance **entertains** because, in

the theatre, participants are held **in between** (*entre*) in the liminality of theatrical time and space, **in play**.

In the course of this study, I have raised many issues and in summarizing my conclusions I do not intend to offer prescriptive statements about how the theatre institution should adjust its priorities and replace the literary tradition with the popular in a revised hegemonic structure. Rather, I would like to think that this dissertation speaks to an inclusive approach, to opening the academy and theatre institution to the possibilities generated when we examine performance traditions. I would suggest that Second Wave Alternate theatre practice challenges the theatre institution in English Canada to rethink the idea of **entertainment** and its place in our idea of the making of theatre.

ENDNOTES

¹ Texts consulted in this context: Philip Auslander, "Toward a Concept of the Political in Postmodern Theatre," *Theatre Journal*, (March 1987), pp. 20-34; Philip Auslander, *Presence and Resistance: Postmodernism and Cultural Politics in Contemporary Performance* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1992); Michel Benamou, "Presence and Play" in Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Eds.), *Performance in Postmodern Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1977), pp. 3-7; Ihab Hassan, *The Postmodern Turn: Essays in Postmodern Theory and Culture* (Columbus, OH: Ohio State University Press, 1987); Linda Hutcheon, *The Canadian Postmodern: A Study of Contemporary English-Canadian Fiction* (Toronto: Oxford Press, 1988); Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1989); Thomas Leabhart (Ed.), "Canadian Post-Modern Performance," *Mime Journal*, (1986); Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge*, Geoff Bennington and Brian Massumi (Trans.) (Minneapolis: University of Minneapolis Press, 1984); Fred McGlynn, "Postmodernism and Theatre" in Hugh J. Silverman (Ed.), *Postmodernism: Philosophy and the Arts* (London: Routledge, 1990), pp. 137-54; Angela McRobbie, "Postmodernism and Popular Culture" in Lisa Appignanesi (Ed.), *Postmodernism: ICA Documents* (London: Free Association Books, 1989), pp. 165-79; Linda Nicholson (Ed.), *Feminism/Postmodernism* (London: Routledge, 1990); Richard Palraer, "Toward a Post-modern Hermeneutics of Performance" in Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Eds.), *Performance in Postmodern Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1977), pp. 19-31; Jerome Rothenberg, "New Models, New Visions: Some Notes Toward a Poetics of Performance," in Michel Benamou and Charles Caramello (Eds.), *Performance in Postmodern Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 1977), pp. 11-17; Sayre, *The Object of Performance: The American Avant-Garde since 1970*.

² Texts consulted: Homi Bhabha, "Remembering Fanon: Self, Psyche and the Colonial Condition" in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), pp. 112-23; Alan Filewod, "Receiving Aboriginality: Tomson Highway and the Crisis of Cultural Authenticity," *Theatre Journal*, (October 1994), pp. 363-73; Northrop Frye, *The Educated Imagination* (Toronto: CBC Enterprises, 1963); Northrop Frye, *Divisions on a Ground: Essays on Canadian Culture* (Toronto: Anansi, 1982); Northrop Frye, *The Bush Garden: Essays on the Canadian Imagination* (Toronto: Anansi, 1971); Rawle Gibbons, "Theatre and Caribbean Self-Definition," *Modern Drama*, XXXVIII(1), (Spring 1995), pp. 52-59; Vijay Mishra and Bob Hodge, "What is Post(-) colonialism?" in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman (Eds.), *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory: A Reader* (London: Harvester

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³ Wickham, as he appears in Chapter 7, footnote #14-17.

⁴ These actors are the French *forains* referred to by Beaumont, p. 87; appears in Appendix B under 1687 (cf. Scott, "Infancy," pp. 127-28; appears in Appendix B under 1695).

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