

than an aggregation of research and creative practices that intersect productively. Over time, questions of lived experience, of gender, sexuality, ethnicity, and class became more urgent than nationhood, and it may be that as successive neoliberal governments pushed state patriotism as the sugar pill of globalization, we felt somehow complicit and uneasy with the paradigm of nation. And as the theatre world became more and more stratified with a widening gap between institutionalization and precarity, we began to ask hard questions about what we were teaching, and to what end. Our students were changing; today they are “native” to digital media more than live performance, and they push us to think of theatre and spectatorship across and through media. That in turn enables us to revise the terms of historical research, and to rethink the object of inquiry.

Sometimes the way forward and the way back converge. In my current research I am looking at the theatre of the First World War. At one end of that, I find myself returning to performance calendars — not to identify and fix events but to understand spectatorship, to see how and where audiences gathered and what they watched. I’m not particularly concerned about “Canadian” in this, except to note how the war experience changed popular understandings of nationhood. For me this is a very personal and local study; as we reach the centenary of the outbreak of the war, I want to know more about what my grandparents saw, at home and in the trenches. I want to know more about the Canadian army theatre school in Mons; I want to look at how theatre both reinforced and disturbed governing ideologies of imperial racism and cultural exclusion. We can anticipate several years of hyperbolic patriotic nonsense from Ottawa about the war as a “crucible” of nationhood, to climax in the centenary of Vimy Ridge in 2017. Already we have been hearing how that victory was the founding moment of the modern Canadian nation, as if the history of a country is reducible to the history of its army. I don’t believe that my grandfather joined the army the day after the victory at Vimy Ridge because he was a patriot; I don’t know whether he even identified as Canadian rather than imperial British. In part my research is my own resistance against the distorted history that is using the trauma of men like my grandfather as grist for propaganda.

The fact that I can even admit to the personal investment in my research interest is a marker of how our discipline had changed over the years since that Laval conference. We may never see another academic posting in “Canadian Theatre” but that just means that, as always, scholars need to adapt to the shifting disciplinary conversations that coalesce into research program and institutes. In theatre history, companies come and go but bodies keep working; in research, disciplines change and adapt, but scholars keep digging. All theatre is local and all things deserve study.

Theatre / Research / Canada

RIC KNOWLES

Theatre Studies in Canada is a young field, but already it has come a long way since the founding in the mid-to-late seventies, in rapid succession, of: *Canadian Theatre Review* (1974); *Canadian Drama/L'art dramatique Canadien* (1975), later folded into *Essays in Theatre/Études théâ-*

trales and later still dissolved; the Association for Canadian Theatre History (1976), subsequently The Association for Canadian Theatre Research, and now the Canadian Association for Theatre Research; and *Theatre History in Canada* (1980), now *Theatre Research in Canada*. Behind these name changes are many stories, and behind those stories are many shifts in the understanding of the disciplines and fields that constitute readers of this journal as a community of scholars.

In the heady early days the focus was on the titular “Canadian” and “in Canada,” and the major endeavour was to establish that there indeed *was* a theatre history in Canada that involved something uniquely “Canadian.” In *Canadian Theatre Review*, founded (ironically) by an American draft resister, the tone was distinctly nationalist, as a contemporary theatrical practice was understood to be only then emerging “from the colonial twilight” (Richardson and Rubin). Meanwhile *Theatre History in Canada* and its sponsoring association were busy establishing roots, identifying the first Canadian play (or theatre, or production), and insisting that Canadian theatre had not begun with the so-called “alternate theatre movement” but had a distinctive past upon which to build—though whether “my Canada includes [comprend?] Quebec” has always been a problem for the journal and the association, mostly because scholars in Quebec have had their own national association and journal and have always been divided or ambivalent about whether or not they wished to be included in Rest-of-Canada’s potentially lethal embrace. Formulations of the field have varied over time, from nationalist, to regionalist (Bessai), to “particularist” (Wallace 2), to multicultural. But “Canada” as a concept seems much less stable now, its histories more multiple and troubled, and its emergence from colonialism somewhat more doubtful and incomplete, as scholars actively engage with theatre produced by Indigenous peoples, recent immigrant communities, LGBTQ communities, and other communities of difference. At the same time, however, the *study* of theatrical activity in the land that is now called Canada is no longer something that needs so vigorously to be defended—except perhaps when talking with book publishers in the US and UK.

The categories of “drama” and “theatre” also meant something different in the mid-70s than they do now. “Drama” at that time had only recently begun to extricate itself from the neglect, or, again, the lethal embrace of literary studies, through the establishment of independent university Drama departments, where the study of “dramatic literature” still dominated and “theatre” as an object of study almost exclusively meant theatre history. But during the 1980s and 1990s dramatic criticism was supplemented and then virtually replaced by “theatre studies,” and semiotic, phenomenological, materialist, and other approaches to the study of theatre as a meaningful event independent of its script gained prominence. Fast forward to the present: drama and theatre departments and programs such as the flagship graduate departments at York and Toronto now embrace in *their* titles the relatively recent inter- or anti-discipline of Performance Studies, and traditional literary-critical or theatre-historical publications form a distinct minority of scholarly output in the field.

This has to do, in part, with another shift, this time in what is considered to constitute research. In the early days of the Association for Canadian Theatre History, research was almost exclusively historical, and primarily involved the detached researcher combing through local, provincial, national, and international archives for empirical evidence that would contribute to (usually) teleological arguments about the birth and development of

Canadian drama or theatre. Even as late as 1989, when the Canadian theatre archives (now a major part of the L.W. Conolly Theatre Archives) were consolidated along with the first graduate program in theatre at the University of Guelph, “research methods” courses were mainly dedicated to bibliographical, biographical, and archival research. But as the contentious 1990 change from History to Research in the titles of the Association and its journal indicate, the scope of research nevertheless broadened considerably during what were sometimes quite bitter “theory wars” in the field in the 1980s and 1990s. At universities, traditional research methods courses were slowly replaced by often baggy assemblages that accommodated various kinds of cultural theory together with “how to” guides to the search engines and digital humanities resources that were replacing card catalogues, print bibliographies, and eventually even travel to archives, as many archives were gradually digitalized. Research, meanwhile, had become less often about “finding” the facts than asking awkward and self-reflexive questions about how and why *those* “facts” were the ones “we” found—we used scare quotes a lot—and how and why they had become organized into the (hi)stories we told—parentheses and plurals of this kind had also become common (and are still useful).

Some of these shifts emerged from an increasing awareness, beginning with feminist and LGBTQ scholarship and extending into Indigenous research methods (See Denzin, Lincoln and Smith; Simpson; Smith; Wilson), and approaches emerging from other kinds of cultural difference (such as “Asia as Method”, see Chen), that research methods and what they discover are not neutral and value free. As Opaskwayak/Cree sociologist Shawn Wilson says, “[r]esearch is all about unanswered questions, but it also reveals our unquestioned answers” (6).

Much of this history of methodological and definitional shifts in the field is visible from Playwrights Canada Press’s twenty-one volume reprint series, *Critical Perspectives on Canadian Theatre in English*, which attempts to provide a history of critical approaches to specific topics since the 1970s. The commissioned new essays at the end of most of those volumes, together with the books in the press’s *New Essays on Canadian Theatre* series, provide a developing glimpse of where we are now.

Where I *think* we are is at a moment of consolidation and revitalization, where early historical, archival, and literary methods are being regenerated and are meeting and merging with more recent methods in an expanded field in ways that have recently proven to be extraordinarily productive, where “Canada” as subject is taken-for-granted rather than belaboured, and where the current editor of *Canadian Theatre Review* is a graduate in Performance Studies from an American University. Take, for a small and selective example, the three books honoured at the most recent meeting (as I write) of the Canadian Association for Theatre Research’s Ann Saddlemyer award presentation in 2013: Kirsty Johnston’s *Stage Turns: Canadian Disability Theatre* (Honorable Mention); Heather Davis-Fisch’s *Loss and Cultural Remains: The Ghosts of the Franklin Expedition*—published, astonishingly, by a major press *outside Canada*; and Jenn Stephenson’s *Performing Autobiography: Contemporary Canadian Drama*. Johnston’s empirical research is impeccable, but it is filtered through a Cultural and Performance Studies lens that constitutes the performance of disability and disability performance as the performance of *culture*. Heather Davis-Fisch’s meticulous archival research and her “objects of study” (including shipboard performances on expeditions of discovery) are reminiscent of the early historical scholarship of the likes of

that eminent historian of Canadian theatre, the late Patrick B. O'Neill, but she too brings sophisticated Performance Studies and Indigenous Studies frames and methods into play in ways that infinitely enrich both her work and our understanding. And Jenn Stephenson's book is firmly grounded in the analysis of dramatic literature, but is also deeply informed by literary, theatrical, and cultural theory, and draws productively on her applied understanding of plays in performance.

The fact that the association was able to honour *three* excellent books in 2013 is in itself a Good Thing (in the early years that might have exceeded the total number of books published). The fact that each of these books integrates the subjects and methods of our earliest and most recent histories as a field in such sophisticated ways is even better.

Theatre Studies in Quebec at the Crossroads

YVES JUBINVILLE

It's time to take stock of over forty years of research and scholarship on theatre in Quebec. This task seems both ambitious and necessary when we consider that the field is experiencing a period of profound rethinking, which points toward an imminent and fundamental reworking of its epistemological program. What is theatre research, one could ask? What, precisely, is designated by the label "theatre studies"? Are there certain types of inquiries, or methods of analysis, which form a unique foundation for the discipline? For several years now, these questions have become current if not recurrent on the international scene. Authors have taken up these questions, not in order to take a position in favour of one theoretical or methodological model to the detriment of others, but rather, with the conscious and explicit goal of mapping the discipline in order to identify the stakes and zones of tension that constitute it. In short, these authors have drafted a careful history of the conditions that have rendered the disciplinary field possible in the first place, and which, supposing the conditions are no longer favourable, could explain the discipline's eventual reconfiguration, not to say dislocation.

We should consider the hypothesis that if circumstances had been different, theatre studies in Quebec might not exist; or, at least, the range of knowledge that the field currently spans would have been quite different. One might expect that, beyond certain commitments that clearly position Quebecois scholars within a supranational community, it is the original trajectory of these people that interests us, a trajectory considered in its singular manifestations as much as in the project that has established the collective corpus of theatre research in Quebec.

We need to offer a caveat in order to delimit the specific horizon of this reflection. To reconstitute the global trajectory of theatre studies in Quebec is certainly not immediately foreseeable. For the time being, we seek to establish the parameters of an investigation in process, which offers a portrait of the situation, as well as to point out the challenges to come