

Chauvinism and its Discontents: *Canadian Theatre Review* Issue 1 Revisited

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"Through their own words...."

—Sinéad O'Connor, "The Emperor's New Clothes"

In the opening article of the 1974 inaugural issue of *Canadian Theatre Review* (CTR1), and again in the closing pages, Don Rubin (co-founder of the journal and author of both entries) deploys a curious choice of word to describe the cultural moment in which he was writing: "[C]hauvinism," Rubin asserts, is the spirit that "characterized Canadian life in the 1970s" ("Creeping" 11); and the heroes of Canadian theatre in this historical moment are the leaders of the alternate theatre movement, whose passionate advocacy for homegrown dramatic content Rubin celebrates as a manifestation of "chauvinistic discontent" ("Abroad" 128).

Reading CTR1 in 2024 (upon the fiftieth anniversary of the journal), these apparently benign invocations of chauvinism give me pause. Instead of the meaning with which I immediately associate it (i.e. as a shorthand for *male* chauvinism), Rubin's usage draws on the term's broader definition: excessive or prejudiced advocacy for one's own cause or group. At its origin, the word derives from the Napoleonic soldier Nicolas Chauvin, known for his fierce militarism and patriotism, and is thus particularly denotative of zealous and aggressive nationalist pride. Other authors in CTR1 invoke chauvinism in this derogatory sense—as synonymous with jingoism.¹ Rubin, however, strips the term of its negative connotations.

¹ Peter Hay identifies the pejorative invocation of chauvinism in critiques of the alternate theatre movement as a "'smokescreen' for defenders of the status quo" (114). Anton Wagner applies the term to the British loyalist hegemony of Charles Mair's *Tecumseh* and John Hunter-Duvar's *De Roberval* (26).

While rhetorically unusual, Rubin's celebration of nationalistic chauvinism can be understood as an expression of his orientation to the historical moment at which he was writing. In his article "Creeping Towards a Culture," first published in *CTR1*, Rubin lays out the now-familiar—and since-contested²—maturation myth of Canadian theatre history, which figures the early 1970s as a moment of cultural self-actualization, epitomized by the leaders of the alternate theatre movement, whose adoption of nationalist mandates and advocacy for Canadian content disrupted the dominance of American and British imports on Canadian stages (and in theatre leadership). This narrative was compelling at a moment when many were frustrated with the funneling of federal arts funding toward regional theatres and—especially—the Stratford Festival, and with how these funding practices persistently restricted opportunities for Canadian artists. In the pages of *CTR1*, this frustration finds expression in a range of responses to the recent appointment of British theatre-maker Robin Phillips as incoming artistic director at Stratford. The journal opens, in the editorial, with a call for Stratford to rescind Phillips's appointment; and multiple articles and interviews in *CTR1* address the controversial hire, with the predominant view that the appointment of a non-Canadian (and, more specifically, an Englishman) to the top job at Stratford represented an extension of colonial subservience that must be vigorously resisted. It is in the context of this controversy, and of the wider nationalist preoccupations among theatre practitioners and scholars in the period, that Rubin identifies *chauvinism* as the defining—and, for him, encouraging—spirit of the times.

Reading *CTR1* at a fifty-year historical remove, however, I find Rubin's choice of word betrays something more in its denotation of excessive or prejudiced advocacy *for one's own cause or group*. In 2024, it is difficult not to notice that, like the overwhelmingly white and male leaders of the celebrated alternate theatre movement, the group documenting the state of theatre in *CTR1* is distinctly homogenous. The list of authors in this inaugural issue is composed entirely of white men. The list of editorial staff includes just one woman (also white) in a leadership position (Ann Saddlemyer, one of thirteen members of the Editorial Advisory Board), while the support staff are all women. This is, of course, representative of the world of the 1970s; *CTR1* is an

² See, for example, Alan Filewod's "Named in Passing: Deregimenting Canadian Theatre History" and Scott Duchesne's "A Golf Club for the Golden Age: English Canadian Theatre Historiography and the Strange Case of Roy Mitchell."

extension of the realities of its historical moment. Looking back, the issue's invocation of chauvinism, intended as rhetorically compelling but socially benign, reflects this context; it also serves as a symptomatic point that exposes what (and whom) is occluded by the prevailing focus, in the 1970s, on the frustrated career aspirations of a group of predominantly white men who perceived themselves as disempowered and marginalized by a theatre culture that would import a British artistic director. Beyond the promotion of a narrow subset of the population as the triumphant representatives of the nation's "chauvinistic discontent," *CTR*1 includes many instances of recurring and inadvertently revealing language choices that serve as entry points to analyze how whiteness and masculinity functioned as the largely unexamined frames through which Canadian theatre was envisioned in the 1970s.

In what follows, I offer a deconstructive reading of revealing rhetoric in the inaugural issue of *CTR*. As Terry Eagleton explains, "the tactic of deconstructive criticism...is to show how texts come to embarrass their own ruling systems of 'logic.'" Deconstruction achieves this by "fastening on the 'symptomatic' points, the *aporia* or impasses of meaning, where texts get into trouble, come unstuck, offer to contradict themselves" (133–134). In my reading, language choices in *CTR*1 serve as symptomatic points that expose the underlying cultural values embedded in this first issue. These values, I argue, establish disciplinary legacies that continue to inform the way we make, think, and write about theatre in the lands known as Canada today.

Where's the Thrust? Chauvinist Rhetoric, Patriarchal Values

*CTR*1 concludes with a particularly striking expression of chauvinist discontent: in the journal's first-ever letter to the editor, Vancouver-based director John Juliani responds to the hiring controversy at Stratford by challenging Phillips "to a duel in order to avenge the honour of our emerging theatrical heritage" (145). You read that right: A *duel*! That quintessentially colonial manifestation of indignant, masculine angst. Elsewhere in *CTR*1, in an interview with Phillips, an unidentified interviewer observes that "For all it's [*sic*] obvious humour, at the root of that challenge is something fairly serious.... John has clearly found your appointment to be an insult to him as a Canadian artist" (in Phillips 64). An "obvious" jest, then, but also a potent—and revealing—gesture. Behind the playful, performative conceit, Juliani's framing of his demand for chauvinistic satisfaction in the language of

European-derived, masculine violence can be read as symptomatic of how theatre practitioners sought, in the pages of *CTR* and beyond, to assert their power in Canadian theatre in this period.



Figure 1: The author (Jessica Riley), pictured with a statue of John Hirsch, self-described “ballsy pioneer” of Canadian theatre. Photo by John Reed.

Such linguistic linkages of masculinity, chivalry, nationalist pride, and violence pervade *CTR*¹. Consider, for example, the rhetoric of John Hirsch’s contribution, in which he celebrates the key players of the alternate theatre movement as imbued with a “*ballsy*, pioneering spirit” (51; emphasis added) he aligns with his own, earlier efforts to support the growth of Canadian theatre, particularly in his role as co-founder of the Royal Manitoba Theatre Centre; like him, the men leading the alternate theatre must “fight many dragons” in pursuit of their noble cause (51). Consider, too, Mark Schoenberg’s pronouncement that for the edification of English Canadian theatre-goers “we must... strike the audience hard and we must strike them often”; this depends, in an alarming turn of phrase, on “an intensity of concept from the director and a burning desire on his [*sic*] part to have the emotional force of a good play *thrust itself deeply* into the consciousness of the audience” (122; emphasis added). It strikes me (so to speak) that the

language used by these authors is deliberately rhetorically heightened (whether playfully or in earnest) and deployed strategically for a political purpose that at the time felt urgent: the advancement of Canadian theatre culture. Nonetheless, that this heightened rhetoric recurrently manifests in ways that inflect the nationalist cultural project with violent masculinity is undeniable, and this rhetorical linkage had implications for the Canadian theatre culture that was being actually and discursively constructed.

The rhetoric of masculinity, nation, and violence becomes linked to actual theatre production in Rubin's recounting of a performance at a Polish theatre festival: "People are shoved from their seats. A fight breaks out. A girl's clothes are ripped off. The lights go on. The naked girl—a member of the audience, not an actress—stares at the audience and begins to cry" (132). In my reading, it is of considerable significance that Rubin shares this anecdote not to express concern for the assaulted woman, but rather to express enthusiasm for the novelty of his experience; this is work, he argues, that Canadian theatre makers should find "well worth examining dramatically." He goes on to quote Artaud: "in the beginning a little real blood is necessary" (132). However, it is not Rubin's blood anyone is letting; it is not Rubin that was publicly stripped naked and made to cry. Herein lies a gap between intention and impact that recurs across this analysis of *CTR*1. Rubin's intent, in describing this performance, is to encourage theatrical innovation in Canadian theatre culture. But we can imagine that a woman in 1974, picking up *CTR* out of an interest in carving out a place for herself in Canadian theatre, could receive the implicit message that her experience, agency, and safety were of little significance in the emerging theatre culture. Encountering this text today, through my own gendered subjectivity, I am positioned to see what Rubin apparently overlooked—and to say what women readers in 1974 were not positioned to express.

The exclusively male authorship of *CTR*1—and the masculine editorial eyes that commissioned, vetted, and shaped its content—produces a restricted frame through which theatrical (and social and political) values are expressed in this inaugural issue. The choice of script for inclusion in *CTR*1 is likewise reflective of the gendered lens that shaped the journal's content: Michael Cook's *The Head, Guts and Sound Bone Dance*, in which only the male characters are granted names; and in which the WOMAN (alternately identified in the script as WIFE) is called a "useless bitch" (91) and told to

“mind [her] place” (90). This is not to say that the script condones the misogyny of its dialogue; only that it does not leave much room for women’s perspectives. Nor does *CTR1* leave much room for the methods of play creation that characterized the artistic production of women in Canadian theatre in the coming decades. Cook, weighing in as the expert playwright in the pages of *CTR1*, confidently asserts the superiority of single-authored scripts over the collective creation model that was emerging in the period and which anticipated feminist work in subsequent decades. For him, nothing of “permanent artistic value” can come out of “the trend toward communal artistic effort”; he dismisses such work as akin to “group sex,” which, he pronounces with presumptuous (and revealing) authority, is bound to be disappointing (75). As with Juliani’s duel, then, it is ultimately all about *his* satisfaction.

My mind turns, as I read *CTR1*, to the ways that women would respond, in subsequent decades, to the Canadian theatre culture being constructed in the 1970s. Top of mind, thanks to Schoenberg’s “thrusting” rhetoric, is Kathleen Flaherty’s 1989 article in *Theatrum*, the short-lived rival to *CTR*, titled “Where’s the Thrust?: Putting Your Finger on the Conceptual Framework,” in which she suggests that the inherited (and implicitly masculine) dramaturgical wisdom, grounded in rising action toward a single climax, that prevailed in Canadian play development in the 1980s, might not be ideally suited to the work of women playwrights. Margaret Hollingsworth makes a similar complaint in the pages of *CTR* in 1991; examining the diminishing effect of existing dramaturgical models as experienced by women playwrights in Canadian theatre, Hollingsworth asks, “Could it be that the rigorous principles of playwriting as applied by men serve to make many women’s scripts bland and unpalatable?” (15).

Recalling her own experience, as an undergraduate student at a 1974 conference that convened the key players in the alternate theatre, Amanda Hale links patriotism and sexism as markers of the moment out of which *CTR1* emerged: “Sparks of nationalist passion flew in all directions. The boys were frustrated... The male voices were loud” (43). Writing in 1987, she articulates the restricted impact of this nationalist passion and frustration: “the great male revolution of the sixties and seventies did not improve the status of women in theatre” (44). The authoritative, dominant voices in the period, of which *CTR1* serves as just one example, viewed the world through a

restrictive lens; and this had lasting consequences not only for the white women I have cited thus far but, quite crucially, for many racialized communities whose absence is powerfully signalled in the revealing rhetoric of *CTR1*.

Carte Blanche: Chauvinist Appropriations

Like the rhetoric of thrusting chauvinism, there is other language in *CTR1* that registers, fifty years later, as inadvertently revealing of values circulating in the 1970s, including those that presage barriers of access in the decades to follow. A predominant theme of *CTR1* is the advancement of 'native' or 'indigenous' drama, terms which at the time signified homegrown plays written by and primarily for settlers. Thus, Mavor Moore reverently quotes Roy Mitchell's "plea for nationalism" in Canadian theatre, delivered at Hart House in 1938 to a presumably white audience: "to build with native stone, to carve in native woods" (70). The word "native" is employed in this sense, by multiple contributors, a total of fifteen times in *CTR1*, and lowercase "indigenous" crops up four times.³ Both words, of course, were commonly used in this way in the period; my interest lies in the fact that, read retroactively, the use of these terms takes on new meaning, registering what was omitted or overlooked in the discursive construction of "Canadian Theatre" in the 1970s. It is striking that among the many plays cited it this issue as illustrative of the great flourishing of 'native' drama in the period, some of the most celebrated are white settler-authored dramas centered on Indigenous subject matter: George Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*, a centennial commission that issued a powerful critique of the systemic, anti-Indigenous racism of Canada's legal and social welfare institutions; Sharon Pollock's *Walsh*, a history play based on Sitting Bull's exile in Canada after the massacre at Little Bighorn in 1876 ; and Herschel Hardin's *Esker Mike and His Wife, Agiluk*, a "social satire" centred on the effects of religious and governmental structures and figures on the lives of its Inuit characters. The authors of *CTR1* are demonstrably conscious of Indigenous peoples inhabiting the land known as Canada; they are even (perhaps especially) interested in their stories. However, their advocacy for an 'indigenous' drama has little to do with promoting capital "I" Indigenous voices, either onstage or

³ The word "native" is employed in this sense on pages 10, 12 (three instances), 14, 23 (two instances), 51, 69 (two instances), 115, 118, and 120. Lowercase "indigenous" crops up on pages 29, 32, 59, and 60.

in the pages of *CTR1*; in both arenas, capital “I” Indigeneity is represented through the perspective of white authors. Read retroactively, this occlusion—and its impacts—speaks more loudly than the original intent. Again, one might speculate about how the normalized exclusion of Indigenous voices in the 1970s (and *CTR1* provides just one textual record of this exclusion, which was widespread), might be received by Indigenous readers past and present.

Moreover, “indigeneity” is rhetorically co-opted, in the chauvinist narrative advanced in *CTR1*, with the white leaders of the alternate theatre figured as resisters of (British) colonial oppression. The nation imagined in this 1970s context—a theatrical “Canada” come of age and ready to fight for self-governance—is constructed in *CTR1* as more significant, more valued, more worthy of championing, than other nations, including those who were here first. As Alan Filewod argues, the 1970s was a period during which “theatre developed in Settler Canada as a means to ...instill fictive indigeneity.” Wrestling with his own “formation” in this formative period, Filewod observes that “the oppositional theatre of my youth was really a generational reset of settler cultural appropriation. The alternate theatre movement of the 1960s and 70s was a repudiation of the British cultural tradition, perceived as residual colonialism by Settlers who were ourselves colonizers” (51). In presenting themselves as the heroic champions of “native” drama, the authors of *CTR1*, along with their contemporaries in the alternate theatre movement, not only claim for themselves a fictive identity as indigenous to this land but also, revealingly, frame themselves (and themselves virtually alone) as righteous resisters of colonial oppression. The Stratford controversy is repeatedly deployed in the service of this construction.⁴ For Hirsch—who would himself, in later years, become Artistic Director at

⁴ Not every contributor to *CTR 1* takes the stance of “petty and adolescent nationalism” (Strike 45) on the Stratford hiring. An interview with Stratford actor, Powys Thomas, himself a British expat, includes Thomas’s view on the controversy, which he argues ought not to be so “narrow”: “What you need is someone who can do the job whether he’s Chinese, South African, Canadian, or English” (in Thomas and Chadwick 38). The gesture toward not only national but racial diversity in Thomas’s comment carries a distinctly disingenuous quality. I wonder just who Thomas is picturing when he posits his hypothetical South African candidate; or what barriers might have been encountered, given the realities of Stratford and its modes of operation, for the imagined candidate from China? Given all we have come to understand about the racist institutional culture at Stratford in the intervening decades, I once again find myself struck by the bigger issues with Stratford—and with Canadian theatre at large—that are left out of the conversation in *CTR 1*, and by the ways that the recurring preoccupation, the hyper-fixation, on the Stratford hire allows for a deflection of these issues, centring the exclusion of white settler men from Canadian theatre as the issue of urgency in this historical moment.

Stratford—this festival devoted to Shakespeare is “a colonial institution that was somehow covered in a nationalistic Canadian blanket” (53), and for many contributors, Phillips’s appointment represents an extension of obsequious deference to Britain, a national inferiority complex Ken Gass describes as the “Canadian colonial mentality” (56). It is to this tendency to look abroad for excellence that the chauvinist heroes of the period are presented as both victims and valiant resisters. This idea of Canada as being colonized, rather than functioning as a colonial power, was very much a mainstream perception in 1974.⁵ In retrospect, however, what is striking is how it allows for the elision of settler-artists’ own imbrication in the ongoing oppression of the original inhabitants of this land; that is the “Canadian colonial mentality” that goes unexamined in this first issue of *CTR*1. Hirsch’s above-quoted description of Stratford—as “a colonial institution that was somehow covered in a nationalistic Canadian blanket” (53)—would hang just as comfortably on *CTR* itself, in this earliest incarnation.

I read the many complaints levelled against Stratford in the pages of *CTR*1, and I think of the more urgent grievances against this institution that would come to light in succeeding decades: I think of Andrew Moodie’s 2003 essay “Alas, I’m not Hamlet,” in which he writes from his experiences as a Black actor at Stratford in the mid-nineties, told of an “unspoken policy never to hire a member of a visible minority in a starring role on the main stage”; I think, too, of the experiences of IBPOC actors and theatre artists who had worked at Stratford, shared in 2020 via the hashtag #inthedressingroom and in the subsequent social media forum, Black Like Me. In hindsight, the complaints against Stratford levelled in *CTR*1—perceived slights that warrant a duel, that demand satisfaction—seem petty. Even Ryga’s contribution, which is by far the most globally conscious and politically engaged article in *CTR*1, incorporating a ringing indictment of racial genocide perpetrated in the Amazon by the Canadian-based corporation Brascan, couches his critique of Stratford within the urgent project of fighting the “cultural subservience and feeling of inadequacy that to this day bedevils the dedicated cultural worker in this country” (28). He terms this colonial legacy a “colossal ‘snow job’”—in yet another turn of phrase that, in its glaring whiteness, inadvertently conjures what is deflected or obscured by the author’s preoccupation with

⁵ The idea of settler Canada as the subject of British colonial oppression, as well as the idea of settler Canadians as indigenous to the territory, is one that is theorized by Daniel Coleman in *White Civility: The Literary Project of English Canada* and Margery Fee in *Literary Land Claims*.

the effects of colonization specifically on white settlers. That Ryga is aware of and invested in the effects of colonization on the first peoples of this land is evinced by his above-mentioned play, *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*; but this awareness is displaced via a narrative in which the white leaders of the alternate theatre movement are figured as the “victims” of this “snow job”—or the only ones explicitly mentioned.

If the phrase ‘snow job’ registers as inadvertently revealing, so does the original title of what is now known as *CTR*’s Views and Reviews section, then titled *Carte Blanche*. Upon reflection, the phrase “carte blanche” sums up much of what is exposed about the unexamined values underlying *CTR*1. Not only in its overwhelming whiteness but also in its invocation of this land, and its theatre, as a blank slate, available for the filling—or the taking. In this sense it resonates with yet another rhetorical recurrence in *CTR*1: the figuring of the heroes of the alternate theatre as “pioneers.” The word is invoked repeatedly, both as a noun and a verb across multiple contributions⁶; recall, for example, Hirsch’s above-quoted celebration of his own and others’ “balls, *pioneering* spirit,” which links the gendered language that first caught my eye with the strategic deployment of nationalist sentiment as a rhetorical land claim. The recurring invocation of the pioneer, like the phrase *carte blanche* (i.e. the right to do as you please) suggests an unexamined, extractivist entitlement. This is legible to me through the work of Indigenous scholars like Dylan Robinson (in *Hungry Listening*) and Jill Carter (in her *CTR* essay “My! What Big Teeth You Have!: On the Art of Being Seen and Not Eaten”), who have traced the far-reaching implications, in theatre and performance practice in the land known as Canada, of a settler mentality that “emerges out of a state of consumption” (Robinson 47). This is the mentality that underwrites the paradoxical rhetoric of *CTR*1, the heroes of which claim for themselves a dual identity as both ‘native’ and ‘pioneer.’ Again, this is expressed in the choice of script to be included in *CTR*1: *Head Guts and Sound Bone Dance* is centred on the devastating effects of resource extraction as experienced by two white men (Newfoundland fishermen) who lament their lost way of life, constructing it as “the way things always was” (Cook 92).

⁶ See pp. 49 (four instances), 51, 54, 59, and 113.

Despite the overwhelming *blanche*-ness of *CTR1*, the issue is haunted by those left out of the “cause or group” to which the chauvinist advocacy of the 1970s was devoted. Beyond the revealing upsurges of the repressed I find haunting the rhetoric, there is also a striking visual counterpoint in the Carte Blanche section: a production photo of actor August Schellenberg (Mohawk) in the role of Sitting Bull in *Walsh* looms over James Portman’s contribution, which champions the notion that “theatre must aim to be a valid part of the community as a whole, not merely of its cultural life” (118). Reading this, with Schellenberg staring out from the opposite page, I am called to reflect, with profound discontent, on the exclusionary community that *CTR1* constructs.

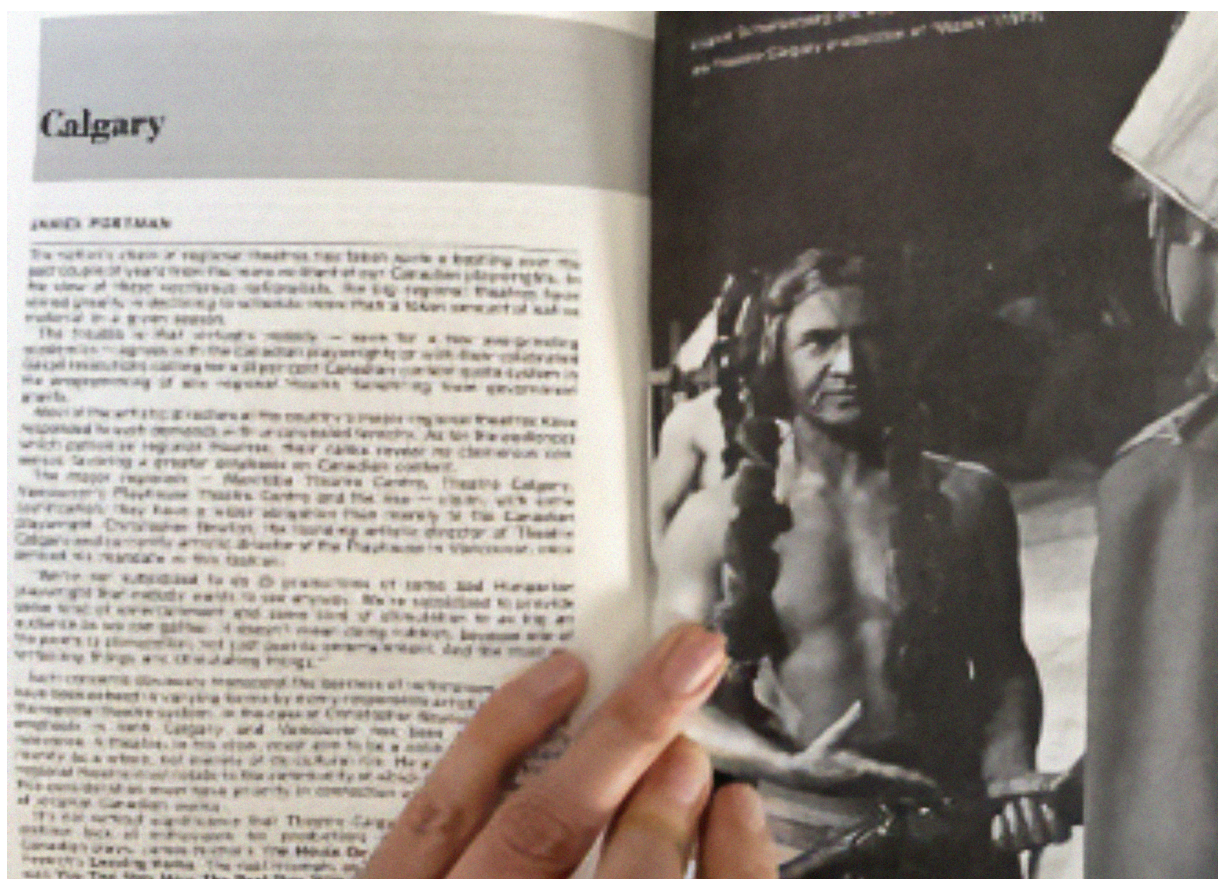


Figure 2: August Schellenberg (Mohawk), in the role of Sitting Bull in Sharon Pollock’s *Walsh*, stares out from the page opposite James Portman’s *Carte Blanche* contribution. Photo by Jessica Riley.

That key figures in the 1970s saw themselves as marginalized and excluded from the Canadian theatrical mainstream—as exemplified in the controversy around Phillips’s appointment at Stratford—seems, paradoxically, to have

caused them *not* to see, or to be primarily invested in, the ongoing (and, I would argue, more urgent) marginalization of other groups. In highlighting the occlusions of this period, my intent has not been to vilify specific individuals who, themselves shaped by the historical context of the 1970s, pursued a restricted chauvinism in their advocacy for “Canadian” drama, “Canadian” theatre workers, and the emergence of a discipline of “Canadian” theatre scholarship. Rather, my aim has been to deconstruct and expose, through the symptomatic points found in just one record of the period (*CTR1*), the exclusionary implications, for the study and practice of theatre, of discipline formation in the context of the nationalist chauvinism of the 1970s, the lasting impacts of which are traceable to the present.

Still thrusting—and thirsting: The Legacies of Chauvinism

Among the white women consigned to supporting roles on the staff list printed in *CTR1*, one name stands out to me as a reader today: Lynn Slotkin, listed as responsible for Circulation. Slotkin, known for reviews of Toronto-area theatre she has posted for years on her blog, *The Slotkin Letter*, has been on my mind since her publication, in November 2023, of a post titled “A Rant: Our World and Our Theatre is Going to Hell in a Handbasket.” Read alongside *CTR1*, Slotkin’s rant registers to me as a deeply troubling expression of chauvinistic discontent. Railing against the “cult of sensitivity” in contemporary Canadian theatre, Slotkin presents “*our*” theatre—by which she means the theatre of the privileged dominant culture, the theatre of the status quo—as under attack by a new generation that is, in her mind, too preoccupied with social justice: these innovators are described as overly sensitive, lacking “moral fiber,” requiring “handholding.” In her eagerness to shore up the supremacy of her own values, the language Slotkin deploys is cruelly, and revealingly, paternalist; as Yolanda Bonnell puts it, in her brilliantly-written counter-rant, Slotkin sounds like an “abusive stepfather.” With this rant, Slotkin also betrays a self-promoting instinct; she is thirsty for a scandal. Slotkin extracts web traffic from the pain she inflicts in this diatribe. She does so under the apparent delusion that she is a righteous defender of Canadian Theatre. This is Slotkin fighting dragons; this is Slotkin throwing down the gauntlet.

The revealing rhetoric of *CTR1* that I have explored here helps to contextualize the circumstances in which Slotkin internalized these values—

values that, in her case, seem to have hardened over the intervening decades. Slotkin waxes nostalgic for her undergraduate days in the 1970s at York University, where *CTR* was founded and where Rubin taught. Perhaps the most pressing issue in the present moment is how to untangle ourselves from the retrograde values the persistence of which Slotkin makes plain; how to get out from under and dismantle these legacies. It is worth observing that both Filewod and Slotkin received similar educations, at roughly the same time, and as Filewod's above-quoted article attests, such dismantling is possible. Indeed, it is Filewod's copy of *CTR* I have been reading, his name scrawled inside the cover.



Figure 3: Alan Filewod's handwritten name, scrawled in the inside cover of a deteriorating copy of *CTR* 1. Photo by Jessica Riley.

This dogeared copy has been falling apart as I have worked on this piece, which seems fitting, hopeful even. Thankfully, Slotkin's rant does not represent the whole picture of theatre in the land known as Canada today. *CTR* in the present is not a platform for these values, but as Slotkin's rant

attests, they remain in circulation. It is tempting to fall back on the language of oppositional dragon slaying, but I will resist the temptation to frame this work as a battle. This is not going to be a problem that gets worked out through a binary us-versus-them logic. That, too, is a colonial inheritance worth letting go.

Having no desire to play the “ballsy pioneer,” or to take violent arms against imagined dragons, I can still find wisdom in the words of Hirsch, my fellow Winnipegger, as expressed in *CTR*1. Reflecting specifically on Stratford’s inherently colonial structure, Hirsch offers the following, hopefully prescient, thoughts on the urgency of both personal and institutional change: “I believe that the enemy to humanity is stagnation. And the most valuable human experience is growth.... Change. Human beings who do not get into the rhythm of it die before their time. And so do institutions.” (54) My hope for *CTR*, and for all theatre institutions we inherit, is that we continue to change, in the present and in the future, even, indeed especially, when that change is not easy; and that we experience growth that flourishes in all directions.

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