

# RE-INTRODUCING CANADIAN "ART OF THE THEATRE"

*Herman Voaden's 1930 Manifesto*

*Sherrill E. Grace*

**I**NTRODUCTIONS ARE IMPORTANT. An editor's introduction to a volume of edited or collected texts situates that collection, valorizes the individual texts, explains why and how the collected items matter and may even claim to be defining a tradition or establishing a canon.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years ago, W. H. New began his "Introduction" to *Dramatists in Canada: Selected Essays* (1972) by noting "the past failure of Canadian writers to react dramatically to their world," and he went on to say that, "until comparatively recently something has gone wrong, and the drama that has reached the stage has frequently died there, without even reaching the tenuous immortality of print."<sup>2</sup>

In 1972 all this was very true. Moreover, as the opening paragraph of an important introductory statement to the first (as far as I am aware) collection of critical essays on Canadian drama, these remarks should not be taken lightly. New recognized that a majority of voices prior to 1972 had announced the futility or quixotic nature of any attempt to create a Canadian drama. Chief amongst the early naysayers was Merrill Denison whose 1928 diatribe called "Nationalism and Drama," reprinted in *Dramatists in Canada*, went so far as to mock even the desire for such a drama. The main voice raised against Denison in the twenties — that of Herman Voaden — was not rediscovered until the early 1980s, ten years too late for New's anthology. But in his "Introduction," New not only recapitulated and contextualized past calls for or dismissals of an indigenous dramatic literature and a Canadian theatre, he also anticipated a new, creative moment for Canadian Drama, one that would pick up where Voaden left off.

New's most optimistic point was that failure was a thing of the past because, in the 1970s, things had changed. His view, however, did not gain general acceptance for another decade. In 1977 Brian Parker published a major critical assessment called "Is There a Canadian Drama?" with sound analysis of plays by Tremblay, Ryga, and Cook. But even here, and as late as 1977, Parker found it necessary to introduce the entire enterprise of Canadian drama with a question.<sup>3</sup>

The first clear evidence of a new critical conviction about the status of Canadian drama appeared in 1980 with the publication of *Canada's Lost Plays* in three volumes edited by Anton Wagner. The publication of four major anthologies in the year 1984-85 confirmed this confident position: these were Richard Plant's *Modern Canadian Drama* (Penguin, 1984), Richard Perkyns' *Major Plays of the Canadian Theatre, 1934 to 1984* (Irwin, 1984), Jerry Wasserman's *Modern Canadian Plays* (Talon, 1985) and Anton Wagner's *Contemporary Canadian Theatre: New World Visions* (Simon & Pierre, 1985). As time passes, 1984-85 may acquire the reputation of a watershed moment for future historians of the drama in Canada because three of these anthologies are major canon-making collections of plays published by major presses and the fourth is a collection of essays and reviews covering the period from the mid-forties to the present.<sup>4</sup> All four take their subject for granted, treat it with respect, and provide innumerable valuable insights into the richness of Canadian theatre history and dramatic literature.

It is not my purpose, however, to discuss these four anthologies or to examine the introductory statements made by the editors, each of whom is clearly articulating his concept of a Canadian canon.<sup>5</sup> I mention them at the outset only to suggest the historical context for my specific subject, Herman Voaden and, further, to establish an important critical perspective for Voaden's early efforts at creating a Canadian "art of the theatre."

When Voaden published his *Six Canadian Plays* in 1930 with the introductory manifesto on which I want to focus, he was not writing in a vacuum. His clarion call was not altogether unprecedented, nor did it go entirely unheeded, and the obstacles to, challenges of, and conditions for a Canadian theatre which he addressed, still exist. Certainly, for the critic using *Dramatists in Canada* (with Denison's essay) as their introduction to the subject, Voaden's remarks will provide an interesting comparison. They also further explain why Wagner and Perkyns give an important place to Voaden in their collections.

In brief, what Voaden perceived by the mid-1920s was that, although Canada lacked the venues, scripts and skilled theatre teams required for a Canadian theatre, the time was ripe for the inauguration of a new, vibrant theatre movement that would breed and nourish a national drama. With great precision and energy, he identified all those prerequisites so familiar to Canadian literary historians today: the value of a spirit of Canadian cultural nationalism, the excitement of the international modernist challenge, and the practical economic and physical exigencies of the stage. Moreover, he did so without qualification or demurral. Writing in *The Canadian Forum* for December 1929, he proclaimed what was already his carefully thought-out position in ringing tones:

Never before has the theatre held such power, richness, and opportunity. [. . .] With communities all over Canada creating native and proper [sic] culture, with the dramatic activities of these communities skilfully guided by provincial and national

organizations, with the soil prepared for the writing and production of new drama, a Canadian Renaissance in art and literature is assured.<sup>6</sup>

And he was right. Why, then, has it taken so long — over fifty years — to materialise? Or has it actually been much less than fifty years? Estimates vary, as a quick comparison of Plant, Perkyms and Wasserman shows. And what, after all, happened to Herman Voaden or to that *avant-garde* theatre that, above all other forms, he espoused? I will return to these questions in my conclusion, but first I want to shift from the present to the past in order to see what was happening on Canadian stages prior to Voaden and, hence, what the context was for his impetus and vision.

**I**N 1923 MERRILL DENISON published four of his realistic treatments of ordinary Canadian life in a volume called *The Unheroic North*, but this “mugwump Canadian” is difficult to place as a “Canadian” dramatist. Despite his contribution to our dramatic literature—in *The Unheroic North* (whose *Brothers in Arms* and *March Hay* have been frequently anthologized), *The Prize Winner* (1928) and his 1931 volume of history plays for radio, *Henry Hudson and Other Plays* — he poured scorn on the very notion of a national drama. Unfortunately, his provocative 1928 essay, “Nationalism and Drama,” originally written for Bertram Brooker’s *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928/29* and included in *Dramatists in Canada* forty-four years later, has been taken as representative of the state of drama in the twenties and thirties.<sup>7</sup>

Denison began by likening the notion of a Canadian drama to “the art of dinghy sailing among the bedoins” and went on to denounce the “dream of a native theatre [as] a product of [...] introspective patriotism.” It was a “mirage,” an “illusion,” a “pious hope,” and one, moreover, that Canadians would be better off without. As far as Denison was concerned — and here is where the ideological ramifications of the subject begin to emerge — Canada lacked an identity and a cultural centre without which a drama could not exist. Furthermore, any dramatist worth “his” salt would leave for London or New York, preferably the latter (as Mitchell did in 1921 and Denison would do in 1931) at the first chance. (Both men had strong early ties with the United States that continued over the years and were bound to colour their responses to any form of Canadian nationalism.) “Life in Cleveland and Toronto,” Denison insisted, “is identical,” and, therefore, a native theatre would be as artificial and pointless as a “native orange industry.”

Denison, however, was not the only player in the Canadian theatre of the twenties. Hart House, which Vincent Massey opened in 1919, first under Roy Mitchell’s guiding hand, later under Carroll Aikins, mounted many varied seasons of play

performances that included a regular number of Canadian plays. In 1926, Massey published eleven of these plays in a two volume edition called *Canadian Plays from Hart House*.<sup>8</sup> In his brief "Introduction," he was optimistic. Although the number of plays by Canadians which had received production (Massey's criterion for inclusion) comprised a "slender company," he saw much hope for the future success of Canadian drama in the nourishment of local amateur theatres. In Massey's opinion, Canadian theatres and stages were "under alien influences" because they "accept [...] what Broadway sends" (p. v); therefore, the "little theatres" were extremely important because they would first provide alternative venues and then, through the encouragement of actual production, they would, according to Massey, "give birth to a drama really Canadian in spirit and, therefore, worthy of Canada" (vii).

Both the plays in Denison's volumes and those in Massey's *Canadian Plays from Hart House* provide very standard fare: sentimental domestic subjects, historical romances, local colour 'realism' with touches of comedy, mystery and farce. There are no budding Ibsens, Strindbergs, Kaisers, Maeterlincks, Shaws or Pirandellos among the lot. But playwriting in Canada and thinking about the theatre during the 1920s was by no means as uninspired and formulaic as these plays alone suggest. Three men were working actively to create both a theatre and a drama that would embrace the twentieth century and provide a sophisticated, *avant-garde* vision of the total theatrical enterprise. They were Carroll Aikins, Roy Mitchell, and Herman Voaden.

Aikins is of special interest to British Columbians because, from 1920-23, he ran the "Home Theatre" in Naramata on Lake Okanagan using the most advanced principles of Adolph Appia and Edward Gordon Craig.<sup>9</sup> In addition to his pioneering work with Hart House, Roy Mitchell published two important pieces during the twenties which had a direct influence upon the younger Voaden. Besides Denison's little diatribe, Brooker's *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928/29* contained two other essays on the theatre: one was Carroll Aikins' "The Amateur Theatre in Canada"; the other was Mitchell's "Motion and the Actor." What Mitchell was concerned with was not a national Canadian drama, but an art of the theatre that would "change the relations of our actors, the form of our plays, perhaps even the shape of our playhouses" (p. 194). The ideas in this essay formed the basis of his 1929 book, *Creative Theatre*, in which he developed his concept of a spiritual, ritualistic theatre art drawing upon the best of eastern and western traditions and exploiting the new expressionist techniques of colour, light, and inner force.

The stage was set and the battle lines clearly drawn when Voaden entered upon the scene. On the one hand, there were the nay-sayers like Denison with their specifically anti-nationalist, thus anti-Canadian-drama position. On the other, there were strong individuals who saw nationalism and the cause of Canadian drama as inextricably related. On the one hand, there were the established, com-

mercial stages with their entrenched preference for all things foreign and financially viable. On the other, there was the burgeoning of amateur theatre in Canada that would lead to the establishment of the Dominion Drama Festival in 1933. The cause of the amateur theatre was picked up by *The Canadian Forum* as early as 1928, and in the November issue that year, Carroll Aikins published an eight page report on the progress of these theatres across the country.<sup>10</sup>

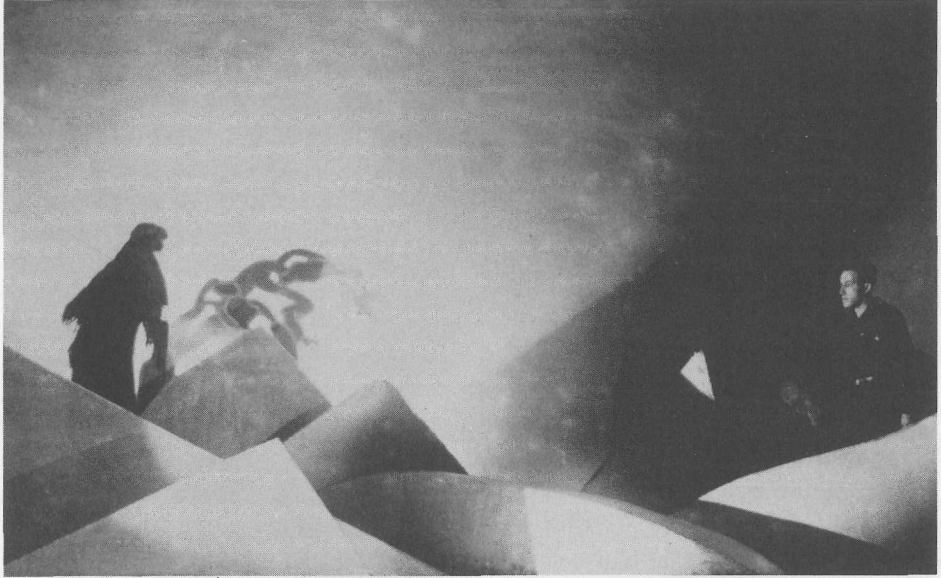
With hindsight, it is possible to argue, first, that these theatres provided the alternate stages essential to the nurturing of Canadian playwrights and, second, that they encouraged Herman Voaden to establish his own theatre workshop in 1934.<sup>11</sup> Two further ingredients required for a theatre renaissance were also on hand: one was the published existence of a number of conventional plays dealing with Canadian subjects; the other was a mounting international excitement and debate over modernism and the revolt against realism (the *bête noir* of modernism) that had already taken European writers, artists and theorists by storm and had moved across the Atlantic to the United States and Canada.<sup>12</sup> In his 1930 "Introduction" to *Six Canadian Plays*, Voaden brought all these ideological and aesthetic positions to bear upon the question of a Canadian drama. The volume with its "Introduction," which is at once expository and complementary, is an extraordinary document, one that has much to tell us about the rhetoric, responsibilities and role of the editor.

In a reminiscence at the end of the seventies, Herman Voaden recounted in detail the event that led to *Six Canadian Plays*.<sup>13</sup> He quoted from a letter, dated 22 February 1930, that he had received from Bertram Brooker in which Brooker regretted the views expressed by Denison in his invited essay for *The Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928-29*, and he went on to comment that: "Down the years the Denison statement has been the text-book, the bible, for those who have ridiculed the cause of a native drama" (TS, 65). But as Voaden explained it, Denison's "unheroic north" spurred him on to espouse "the cause of the *heroic north*" (TS, 68), and, hence, to conceive *Six Canadian Plays*.

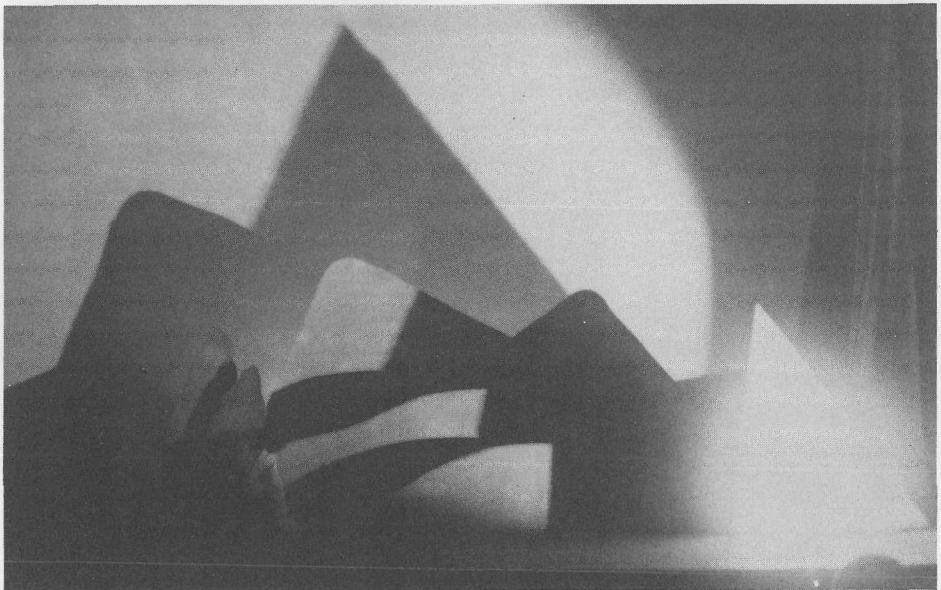
During 1929-30, Voaden held a contest at the Central High School of Commerce in Toronto, where he was Head of the English Department, for original plays requiring "an exterior northern setting." Contestants were encouraged to follow the mood and/or subject matter of contemporary painting. From the forty-nine scripts submitted, three were selected for workshop production and these, together with three more, were chosen by Voaden to comprise *Six Canadian Plays*.<sup>14</sup> The book itself, now long out of print, is a collector's item, not least for its inclusion of seven exquisite line drawings by Lowrie Warrener (see illustrations 3 and 4), black and white photographs of Lismer's "A September Gale, Georgian Bay" (1921), Lawren Harris' "Above Lake Superior" (c 1922), J. E. H. MacDonald's "The Solemn Land" (1921), Tom Thomson's "The West Wind" (1917), and photographs of the sets for two productions (see illustration 2).<sup>15</sup> In

VOADEN

These illustrations, numbers 2, 3 and 4 from *Six Canadian Plays*, demonstrate clearly the sources of inspiration for Voaden's volume and his stage sets. They also show the close association of Voaden and Warrener. Numbers 1 and 2 are photographs of the sets for *Winds of Life* and *Lake Doré*; they were designed by Lowrie Warrener and executed by E. H. Thomas, with original photography by Allan Sangster. Numbers 3 and 4 are examples of the drawings for *Six Canadian Plays* by Lowrie Warrener: at top is his drawing for *Winds of Life* with its strong resemblance to Thomson's "The West Wind"; the bottom drawing appears with *The Bone Spoon*.



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2



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addition to his ten page introductory manifesto, Voaden also included two highly inspiring quotations from Brooker's own introductory essay to the 1928-29 *Year-book* called "When We Awake!" some production notes with a glossary, and a brief "Preface" explaining the origin for and the goals of the book:

If [Voaden writes], in reaching schools, study groups, little theatres, and the general reader, it arouses the interest of our audience in "the Canadian mood," and if it encourages playwrights and other artists to give themselves more whole-heartedly to the expression of our own land and people, it will have accomplished its major purpose. (vii)

Voaden, however, had several goals in mind beyond this primary and general one. As the "Introduction" makes clear, *Six Canadian Plays* was both text and model, political statement and aesthetic vision. The book as a whole, then, makes *manifest* — it is both argument *and* practical manifestation. After an opening flourish in which he acknowledges the sources of his own inspiration in Emerson, Whitman, Brooker, and the Irish Literary Renaissance (Yeats, Lady Gregory, and Synge), and above all in the canvasses of the Group of Seven painters and the vision of their first champion, F. B. Housser (who published *A Canadian Art Movement* in 1926), he explains that Canadians are on the threshold of a great artistic discovery:

The sense of imminent adventure is upon us. We should have no fear. . . . Our idealism is . . . fresh and untrammelled. It is an idealism of our own, owing something to the spirit of our wide-reaching land. The North makes the greatest contribution to this spirit; to use Lawren Harris' terms, it has a "spiritual clarity." . . . Great things may be done if we have faith in ourselves and in our dynamic and creative power. (xx)

The second half of the "Introduction" is devoted to explaining what can be done in the area of Canadian drama. Voaden identifies three distinct types of play that should contribute to a full dramatic expression in this country — realistic, romantic and "art of the theatre." The first two he discusses briefly. Realistic plays can be set anywhere in the country, will draw upon "elemental passions," and will follow the lines explored by Hauptmann, the Manchester School, the Abbey Theatre and the native folk drama of the American, Paul Green; Merrill Denison's work is Voaden's example of this kind of play. Romantic plays offer Canadians a unique scope, according to Voaden, because there is a largely unexplored romance subject matter of discovery and exploration awaiting the playwright's treatment. Moreover, Indian subjects and the frontier provide rich possibilities; in this connection, Voaden cites the work of Marius Barbeau and Bret Harte. But clearly what most interests Voaden is an "art of the theatre," and it is on this type of drama that he pins his greatest hope.

What he is advocating is a type of play, perhaps modelled on the Wagnerian *Gesamtkunstwerk*, and certainly applying all the new advances of theatre men like



Appia and Craig, in which the *experimental* dramatist can create new forms for new expression. Because the theatre has always acknowledged its ancient roots in ritual and worship, it has also been capable of attaining new formal means to match its restless spirit. Voaden's love and respect for the theatre, as well as his extensive practical and theoretical knowledge of it, serve him well here as he proceeds, step by step, to proclaim his challenge to the contemporary hegemony of realism in Canada. Quoting Eugene O'Neill's rejection of "the banality of surfaces," he notes the variety of approaches available to the contemporary *avant-garde* playwright — "Symbolism, formalism, stylization, constructivism and expressionism" (xxii) — all of which share an anti-mimetic spiritual purpose.

Some of Voaden's own personal favourites are O'Neill and the German expressionists, notably Ernst Toller, whose *Masse Mensch* he praises at length, but he stops short of insisting that any *one* dramatic form or model is sufficient for the new Canadian "art of the theatre." Instead, he concludes his elegantly structured, clear and persuasive statement with an appeal for a *national* drama in many different forms that will be good, and universal, by virtue of its Canadian authenticity:

We want realistic and romantic drama in Canada, glowing with the power and appeal of living dialogue and intense human action. But we should be aware of wider artistic opportunities. The challenge to our dramatists is to seek an ever varying expression of our life [and] to join hands with our painters, sculptors, dancers and musicians to create new combinations of the arts, lifting them all to inspired levels of beauty and significance in which they may be universal, being the reflection of the vision and beauty of a new people in a new land. (xxiii-iv)

Implicit here is the idea that the best route to universality is to dig deeply into the local, personal and immediate, and not to ape the foreign or so-called international fashion. Also implicit here, and throughout the "Introduction," is Voaden's belief in a northern mystique with its roots in the political boosterism of the Canada First movement, the growth of the nature park mentality, the neo-platonic elements of Theosophy (Voaden admired both Harris and Brooker), and the widely popular aesthetic theories of Wilhelm Worringer and Wassily Kandinsky.<sup>16</sup> Today it is this northern quality that links Voaden most emphatically to his period (to the Group, the pages of *The Canadian Forum*, and the experiments of F. R. Scott, A. J. M. Smith, and W. W. E. Ross, for example) and to ours. Indeed, the continuing articulation of a northern myth has interested many Canadian writers and critics in the second half of this century, from Hugh MacLennan, Ralph Gustafson, and Al Purdy to Margaret Atwood, Robert Kroetch, and Rudy Wiebe.

About the six plays included in the collection, a few points should be made. Although no dramatic genius lies obscured in its pages, it is nonetheless true that each of the plays demonstrates greater innovation than anything previously published in the *Hart House* volumes or by Denison. Each of these one-acters explores or stretches staging possibilities, and each represents a different approach to the

business of playwrighting. Four are basically realistic (*The Mother Lode*, *Lake Doré*, *God-forsaken*, and *Winds of Life*), but in different ways, spanning distinct subject areas (mining exploration, domestic tribulation, and personal tragedy), while *The Bone Spoon* is a historical romance with a contemporary (today we might say historiographic) twist, and *Manitou Portage* “lends itself,” in Voaden’s words, “to expressionistic production” (50). Each play is accompanied by a short introduction identifying its author and drawing the reader’s attention to its production qualities, and four of the plays are linked to a specific Group canvas. For example, in a paragraph beneath the plate of Tom Thomson’s painting, Voaden explains that *The Winds of Life* “was suggested by ‘The West Wind,’” and that Thomson’s death in 1917 has “made him an almost mythical figure” (120). He, thereby, valorizes the play and his own enterprise by association and by aesthetic contextualization.

Taken as a whole, with Warrener’s drawings, the plates, plays, and Voaden’s “Introduction,” the volume represents a ground-breaking work. That it was recognized as such at the time was no accident. In his *Globe* column for 6 December 1930, drama critic Lawrence Mason described it as “Canada’s first volume of genuinely Canadian plays” and as a “first step . . . toward the creation of an authentically Canadian drama and theatrical art.”<sup>17</sup> He praised the plays themselves for being passionately new and Canadian instead of derivative of European fashions, but he reserved highest praise for the editor whom he quoted at length, and whose book he called “epoch-making.”

WHAT EPOCHS, MILE-STONES, or other breakthroughs were, in fact, made by Voaden with *Six Canadian Plays*? Judging from received opinion, a Canadian drama did not exist until, at the earliest, 1950 in John Coulter’s *Riel* or even later with the 1967 successes of George Ryga (*The Ecstasy of Rita Joe*) and John Herbert (*Fortune and Men’s Eyes*, written in 1963, with a first professional production in New York in 1967). Certainly, Herman Voaden has, until fairly recently, been forgotten as a playwright and theatre visionary.<sup>18</sup> In looking back, critics and literary historians have privileged Merrill Denison’s views as definitive and perceived his predictions as inevitable and self-fulfilling. Why this should be so is hard to understand, but it is perhaps a lingering sign of Canada’s pernicious “colonial cringe.” Undervaluing what they have in the present, Canadians are too quick to discard the possibility that they had something in the past, unless it came from elsewhere. To be fair, it is also true that a vital native *theatre* is a late acquisition in new countries which must first build the economic, industrial and urban centres to support the co-operative efforts of an active theatre art, and

this task was neither easy nor a high priority in post-Depression, pre-World War Two Canada.

However, the present scenario is far from bleak, and Voaden's efforts are no longer forgotten. His 1936 play, *Murder Pattern*, received a fine amateur revival in Toronto in March 1987, and Richard Perkyns includes Voaden's 1934 play *Hill-Land* in his anthology. Moreover, Perkyns makes a strong case for beginning his "comprehensive anthology" with this play. In short, Perkyns is arguing for a tradition of "outstanding" plays that "reflect the total Canadian ethos," a tradition that begins with Voaden and proceeds through James Reaney who, he claims, fulfils the "imaginative theatre that Voaden had been advocating, (ix).

For anyone reading, writing, or teaching Canadian drama today, it is important to know that sixty years ago a Canadian playwright well versed in modernist aesthetics had the courage and the vision to call for an "art of the theatre" that would celebrate Canadian life in forms as varied as the realism of David French or Sharon Pollock, the improvisatory agit-prop of Theatre Passe Muraille, the historical plays of Carol Bolt or Rick Salutin, the expressionism and fantasy of George Ryga, George Walker, Judith Thompson, or the powerful native theatre of Tomson Highway and the experimental *Gesamtkunstwerk* of Robert Lepage.

Despite his sophistication and idealism, Voaden stayed in Canada which may, in a perverse way, explain why his collection of plays and "Introduction" took so long to be rediscovered while the negative cynicism of the expatriate Denison has been remembered. But it is Voaden's manifesto that has stood the test of time, and it is his "Introduction" that provides the historical link with New's 1972 volume and with the anthologies of the 1980s.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> This study was first presented as a paper, with slides, at the University of Alberta's 1987 conference on "The History of the Literary Institution in Canada: Prefaces and Literary Manifestos." It has undergone revision since then, although I have tried to preserve something of its original polemical and historiographic intention. I would like to thank Barbara Godard whose expert discussion of the manifesto as practice and *topos* helped me to appreciate the nature and function of Voaden's text. As she pointed out in her paper, the manifesto has always had a strong link with an *avant-garde*, both as explication and as empowering act of validation, all of which is true of Voaden's 1930 project. To Herman Voaden (1903-1991) we all owe thanks.

<sup>2</sup> *Dramatists in Canada: Selected Essays* (Vancouver: UBC Press 1972): 1. Most of these essays first appeared in the journal *Canadian Literature*; four, including Merrill Denison's "Nationalism and Drama," were added to provide greater inclusiveness and, in Denison's case, "to allow for the expression of earlier significant views" (vii). Denison's essay was reprinted again in *Canadian Theatre Review* 8 (1975): 74-78.

<sup>3</sup> "Is There a Canadian Drama?" *The Canadian Imagination: Dimensions of a Literary Culture*, ed. David Staines (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard UP, 1977):

- 152-87. Significantly, Parker begins by explaining his title as modelled on Douglas Bush's 1929 title, "Is There a Canadian Literature?" and he goes on to assert that in the 1920s the "very situation of Canada was inimical to drama" (153). For Parker, a quality drama of international stature emerged in Canada with Reaney, Tremblay, and Ryga.
- <sup>4</sup> Each of the anthologies includes extensive bibliography of primary and secondary materials. Amongst these items, the following might be mentioned here: the journals *Canadian Drama*, *Theatre History in Canada*, and *Canadian Theatre Review*, begun between 1974 and 1980; *The Brock Bibliography of Published Canadian Plays in English, 1766-1978* (Toronto: Playwrights' Press, 1980); and a variety of published interviews and conversations.
- <sup>5</sup> Perkyns takes the most thorough historical approach to his subject, and Diane Bessai and Don Kerr have started to map the landscape of plays by Canadian women in *Plays by Women* (Edmonton: NeWest Press, 1987).
- <sup>6</sup> "A National Drama League," *The Canadian Forum* 9.99 (December, 1928): 105-06.
- <sup>7</sup> *Yearbook of the Arts in Canada, 1928-29*, ed. with an introduction by Bertram Brooker (Toronto: Macmillan, 1929).
- <sup>8</sup> *Canadian Plays from Hart House*, 2 vols., ed. Vincent Massey (Toronto: Macmillan, 1926). Massey had already published on "The Prospects of a Canadian Drama," *Queen's Quarterly* 30 (October 1922): 200. I would like to thank my colleague, Jerry Wasserman, for information on these and other early discussions of our drama. See also Anton Wagner's *Canada's Lost Plays III* (Toronto: Canadian Theatre Review Publications, 1980).
- <sup>9</sup> See James Hoffman, "Carroll Aikins and the Home Theatre," *Theatre History in Canada* 7.1 (1986): 50-70.
- <sup>10</sup> *The Canadian Forum* began sporadic publishing of theatre articles in a 1922 issue (2.24), but a regular column, called "The Stage," written by Fred Jacob, did not begin until 1925. In this column, Jacob wrote on drama in general, noting especially the process of O'Neill during these years. Special attention to Canada did not start until the end of the decade. One of the earliest pieces on the issue of Canadian playwrighting is Fred Jacob's "Waiting for a Dramatist" in *The Canadian Magazine* 43.2 (June 1914): 142-46.
- <sup>11</sup> Voaden was one of the founders and the first Director of the Sarnia Drama League in 1927-28, and he attended George Pierce Baker's Workshop at Yale in 1930-31. But with an M.A. thesis on O'Neill behind him by 1926, as well as performances in plays by O'Neill, Maeterlinck, and Kaiser from 1926-27, he was extremely well prepared for this task in the 1930s.
- <sup>12</sup> Canadian artists such as Lawren Harris, Charles Comfort, and Bertram Brooker were well versed in modern art, aesthetics, and literature. One might note, in this connection, Harris's acquaintance with the ideas of Kandinsky and the poetry of Eliot, or Brooker's knowledge of contemporary theatre and visual abstraction, or Charles Comfort's defense of modern art in "The Painter and his Model" reprinted in *Documents in Canadian Art* (Peterborough: Broadview Press, 1987).
- <sup>13</sup> This unpublished typescript is called "Symphonic Expressionism: A Canadian adventure in the direction of a more musical and expressive theatre" (1975). I would like to thank Herman Voaden for permission to quote from it.
- <sup>14</sup> *Six Canadian Plays* (Toronto: Copp Clark, 1930); all references are to this edition.

- <sup>15</sup> Lowrie Warrener, painter, sculptor and teacher, was a close friend of Voaden's. They travelled across Canada in 1929 (while Voaden was working on the idea for *Six Canadian Plays*) and co-authored the hitherto unperformed expressionist *tour de force Symphony*. For discussion of Warrener see John Flood, "Lowrie Warrener," *Northward Journal: A Quarterly of Northern Arts* 25 (1982): 11-28, with illustrations; and Anton Wagner, "A Country of the Soul: Herman Voaden, Lowrie Warrener and the writing of *Symphony*," *Canadian Drama* 9.2 (1983): 205-25. *Symphony* has been published in *Canada's Lost Plays*, vol. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> For extensive discussion of these converging ideas, see Douglas Cole, "Artists, Patrons and Public: An Inquiry into the Success of the Group of Seven," *Journal of Canadian Studies* 13.2 (1978): 69-78; Michelle Lacombe, "Theosophy and the Canadian Idealist Tradition: A Preliminary Exploration," *Journal of Canadian Studies*, 17.2 (1982): 100-18; Victoria Evans, "Bertram Brooker's Theory of Art as Evinced in his 'The Seven Arts' Columns and Early Abstractions," *The Journal of Canadian Art History* 9.1 (1986): 28-44; Ann Davis, "An Apprehended Vision," Ph.D. York University 1973; and Sherrill Grace, "'Figures in a Ground': Bertram Brooker and the Craft of Fiction," *Provincial Essays* 7 (1989): 63-76.
- <sup>17</sup> Lawrence Mason, "Genuine Canadian Drama," *The Globe and Mail* 6 December 1930: 21.
- <sup>18</sup> It is largely due to the work of Anton Wagner, who included *Wilderness* and *Murder Pattern* in *Canada's Lost Plays*, vol. 3, together with useful introductions and notes, that Voaden's work is now receiving attention. I have discussed his work in *Regression and Apocalypse: Studies in North American Literary Expressionism* (Toronto: U of Toronto P, 1989): 117-37. The Voaden papers are held in the York University Archives, and a successful revival of *Murder Pattern*, directed by Heinar Pillar, played at the George Brown Theatre in Toronto in March 1987. For permission to quote from Voaden's works, and to reprint the plates, I am indebted to Herman Voaden.

## HUTS

*Elizabeth Harper*

*for Earle Birney 1979*

I could begin, "You  
 probably  
 don't remember that old hut  
 — you've been to Spain  
 and found a spider; I  
 know about your life —"