

# PERFORMING FACT

## *Canadian Documentary Theatre*

*Robert C. Nunn*

**D**OCUMENTARY THEATRE IS A CREATION of our century: its history begins with Erwin Piscator's production of *In Spite of Everything* in 1925.<sup>1</sup> Many reasons have been advanced for its development: it is a response to a deeply-felt need to penetrate to the truth hidden in the massive accumulation of facts;<sup>2</sup> it is an adaptation of the rhythm and tempo of theatre to a sensibility created by the mass media, especially film;<sup>3</sup> it is designed to dispel "the artificial fog behind which the world's rulers hide their manipulations."<sup>4</sup> It is indeed, like its close cousin, epic theatre, theatre for the scientific age,<sup>5</sup> and like it, foregoes the traditional emphasis of dramatic theatre on the timelessness of the human condition in favour of an emphasis on the human situation unfolding in a specific historical context.

Reasons can likewise be offered to account for the dominant role documentary drama has played in Canadian theatre. A colleague of mine has overheard people looking at paintings by the Group of Seven and saying "I know where that is; I was there," and suggests that documentary plays offer Canadian audiences that elementary satisfaction of recognizing real places and real people — perhaps satisfying the deep need, which Northrop Frye has spoken of, to find answers to the question "where is here?"<sup>6</sup>

There is another way of looking at documentary theatre which offers a particularly fruitful approach to the critical study of Canadian documentary plays. That is to see it as one of a number of efforts whereby the modern theatre has sought to revitalize itself and rediscover its own possibilities. Let us examine two statements by major practitioners of documentary theatre to see what specifically theatrical concerns have gone into its making.

Peter Weiss, in an interview published in 1966, said: "There are new possibilities for a theatre which can take up the reality in and around each human life, and a renaissance is coming for theatres from vastly different and unexpected directions — at one side, the Theatre of Happenings, and on the other extreme the theatre of documentation."<sup>7</sup> He is speaking of the relation of theatre to the world outside itself, and of documentary's capacity to breathe new life into that relation.

Peter Brook, introducing *Tell Me Lies*, a book about his work with the Royal Shakespeare Company on a documentary play about the war in Vietnam, says, "all theatre as we know it fails to touch the issues that can most powerfully concern actors and audiences at the actual moment when they meet. . . ." <sup>8</sup> Here Brook expresses a concern not only for the bearing theatre may have on the reality surrounding the theatrical event but also for the quality of the theatrical event itself.

Documentary theatre, then, is a vehicle for exploring two areas of vital concern: the relation of theatrical performance to reality, and the relation of performers to their audience.

Indeed the dual focus on the actual world and on the actuality of performance appears to be the structural principle of documentary theatre. The two are intimately related in performance by a powerful sense of the analogy between them. As the performers reveal the truth hidden within the facts, they lay bare their own activity as performers. As in Brecht's epic theatre, their primary *gest* is the *gest* of showing. <sup>9</sup> By its very nature, documentary performance is presentational. The form of documentary theatre is generated by the relation between these two actualities. The real event and the actual moment in the theatre form a binary pair which can be combined in an abundance of ways: hence the richness and diversity of the documentary form. <sup>10</sup> Paul Thompson, talking about *The Farm Show*, provided a fruitful metaphor for this fundamental relationship:

You have the reality and you have what we did in the play, and of course there's a difference. . . . But to be confronted with the two is just fantastic because — you feel that you can respond to both — echoing off this one and echoing off that one. . . .

Thompson's "echoing" is a useful metaphor for the relation between the actuality of the subject and the actuality of the theatrical moment because it points to the essential fact that the relationship is directly apprehended in the immediate moment of the performance.

Canadian documentary theatre must be seen in this context. In a culture which scarcely can be said to have had a theatre until the last two decades, the question "what is theatre?" has no answers except those borrowed from other cultures or those we discover for ourselves. Documentary theatre has proved to be a particularly congenial instrument with which to conduct this process of discovery by virtue of its inherent capacity to generate an intense awareness of two areas of experience represented by the question "where is here?" ("here" being a specific place in the real world) and by the question "what is going on here?" ("here" being the actual place where actors and audience meet). Both questions have an urgency in the Canadian context, and this urgency may account for the fact that a substantial number of the most interesting plays to emerge during our first period of sustained theatrical activity have been documentaries. An examination

of representative documentary plays of the last decade is worth undertaking, partly because the plays merit the closest attention, and partly because they exploit the potentialities of the documentary form with such clarity that analysis contributes to our understanding of the genre.

THE SIMPLEST RELATION between the reality and what is done in the play is the thematic affinity we observe in *Paper Wheat*.<sup>12</sup> The theme of the subject matter, co-operation, is exemplified by the activity we witness in the here-and-now of the performance. Of course any play is a co-operative enterprise: but in *Paper Wheat*, the ensemble's co-operative activity is foregrounded: that is to say, an element of performance that normally and automatically registers as subordinate is granted unusual prominence.<sup>13</sup> Here, the foregrounding of co-operation immeasurably enhances the force with which the theme is communicated. Don Kerr puts it well in his contribution to *Paper Wheat: The Book*:

The play shows us intensely things we know well, how people come together to work, how important and substantial human endeavor can be. The way *Paper Wheat* came together and the way it was performed are examples in action of the values the play supports.<sup>14</sup>

We can see more clearly how the reality of the play's subject and the reality of its mode of performance combine once we have looked at each one separately. Looking at what is performed, we see a thematic contrast between two opposing theories about how human beings function together: one pictures human society as a collection of separate individuals each acting out of self-interest, while the other pictures human beings as capable of working collectively for the common good.

At the beginning of the play, we are presented with an image of settlers arriving on the prairies one by one, each pursuing his or her private goal. Bill Postlethwaite, the character who comes from the cradle of private enterprise, the industrial North of England, exemplifies this individualist thrust. He has come "to be [his] own master," he announces. As the play progresses, we see the settlers forging links with one another as a creative response to the caprices of the weather and the exploitative practises of speculators and capitalists. The Grain Exchange, symbol of the ethic of private enterprise, is opposed by progressively stronger symbols of the ethic of co-operative enterprise: first the Grain Grower's Grain Company and then the Saskatchewan Wheat Pool. In a thematically important scene, Bill Postlethwaite painfully sets aside his adherence to the ethic of private enterprise to accept help from his neighbour in return for the help he discovers he can give. If Bill can change, it is implied, anybody can. Or, more to the point, if Bill can learn, anybody can, for the play stresses the capacity of humans to

educate themselves into an awareness of the power of the co-operative spirit to transform the world and human nature itself.

Whether or not human nature is capable of change is indeed the philosophical issue at the heart of the play. Ed Partridge, the founder of the Grain Growers' Grain Company, addresses the issue squarely when he takes on the critics of his vision of a co-operative society and their clinching argument: "you can't change human nature." He quotes an ironic poem about a stone-age visionary who foresees modern civilization and is silenced by his neighbours who all cry:

"Before such things can come,  
You idiotic child,  
You must alter human nature!"  
And they all sat back and smiled.

Underlying this is a central feature of socialist thought, the idea that human nature is not a given but a progressive revelation of possibilities of being human as man and society alter and are altered in the historical process.

This is contrasted with the ideology of an unalterable human nature supporting the social relations characteristic of private enterprise. A "representative of a Private American Grain Company" explains that the farmer "has to look after his own best interests and get as much out of his work, his hard work, as he can. It's just human nature. And you can't change human nature . . . free enterprise is the natural . . . way of life." The exponents of this ideology appear frequently throughout the play, for example John Pearson, "the farmer's friend," who sells the same horse, wagon and provisions over and over again to a series of would-be settlers, and in the elevator agent:

SEAN: The scale's working, eh?  
AGENT: Oh, yeah. She's working great.  
SEAN: Who for?

Its essence is captured in a line from the cynical "co-operation" song which declares "the only Pool I want is in my backyard." Thus, underlying the specific historical processes and events referred to in the play is a debate over the nature of man as a social being.

The performance exerts a powerful influence on how that debate is perceived by an audience. The co-operative effort of the company is manifest in that the actors did not hide their own individual identities or the fundamental gest of showing. The strong personal magnetism of the cast that toured Saskatchewan with the version recorded in *Canadian Theatre Review* was their own stuff, which they invested in the multiple roles they played.<sup>15</sup> Quite literally then an audience saw not only characters working together but actors working together. Moreover, the theme of the play was radically transformed in the mode of performance; whereas in the first, private enterprise and co-operation were set at

odds, in the latter the conflict was turned around into mutually-enhancing opposites. The performance was a co-operative effort but was also designed to display the strong individuality of the performers; their personality, their ethnic identity, and most importantly their unique talents. Lubomir Mikytiuk's juggling skill was highlighted, as were Sharon Bakker's skill at mimicking men, David Francis' dancing skills, Bill Prokopchuk's fiddling skills, Michael Fahey's guitar and banjo playing, and Skai Leja's strikingly beautiful singing. The cumulative effect of these moments in which each performer steps out from the ensemble is suggested by the title of a piece the fiddler plays towards the end of the show: "My Own Little Two-step." Everybody in the cast owned some unique talent and displayed it so that it received the maximum degree of attention. They owned them *and* they pooled them. It was like seeing private enterprise included within a larger and fuller collective enterprise, and neither losing that special sense of individuality nor being cut off and set in opposition. In sum, actuality and theatricality in *Paper Wheat* share a theme in a very striking way. The thing that is really happening on the stage and is immediately and concretely apprehended by an audience is a radical transformation of the theme conveyed in the drama, and indeed provides the experiential basis for arriving at a judgment on the issues addressed in the play.

In *Paper Wheat*, the theatrical event served to effect what Peter Cheeseman calls "an imaginative penetration of the source material."<sup>16</sup> The principal reality was the actual event, while the theatrical event was so to speak at its service. It is possible, however, for that degree of emphasis to be reversed, in which case, the principal side of the relationship is the immediate moment in the theatre, and the truth that is being illuminated is an aspect of the real world which the audience inhabits and which in fact either stays as it is or changes as a result of daily choices in which that audience participates. The theatrical reflection of a real event functions in that context as an alienating device: it renders strikingly visible, or foregrounds, an aspect of the audience's reality which has hitherto been so familiar as to be invisible. The veracity of the material presented is every bit as important as it is in *Paper Wheat*, but it serves a different purpose: the material authenticates the alienation-effect, by the simple fact that it was found, not invented.

**L**ET US CONSIDER Sharon Pollock's *Komagata Maru Incident*.<sup>17</sup> While not literally a documentary in that no primary source material is identified as such in the play, it is in the spirit of documentary because it is based on documented facts, and because it effects a significant meeting of the actual event and the theatrical event. The play chronicles an incident in 1914 when the Canadian Immigration Department refused entry to all but twenty of three

hundred and seventy-six British subjects of East Indian origin. The truth that the play conveys, however, is not primarily the truth about that incident. It is the truth that is immediately apparent to any member of an average Canadian audience who looks around him when the houselights go up. The audience is a component of the theatrical event that is rarely singled out as an object of attention. When this normal, automatic state of affairs is interrupted, as it is in *The Balcony* by Genet or Handke's *Offending the Audience*, an audience becomes sharply aware of itself. This is what happens in *The Komagata Maru Incident*. From the beginning, the audience is reflected back to itself in the role of an idly curious crowd at a carnival sideshow, by a character who functions as Master of Ceremonies. The auction is punctuated by speeches like this:

Hurry! Hurry! Hurry! Absolutely the last and final chance to view the Komagata Maru! Anchored in picturesque Vancouver Harbour for two, count 'em, two glorious months! Note the cruiser standing by to the right, see the sun on its guns, what a fantastic sight! Ladies and gentlemen, can you truly afford to bypass this splendid spectacle? Run, my good friends, you mustn't walk, you must run! Cotton candy, taffy apples, popcorn and balloons! All this and a possible plus, the opportunity to view your very own navy in action with no threat to you!

The irony of this assigned role is underscored at the end of the play. The last fact we learn is the execution of the East Indian who assassinated an inspector of the Immigration Department. Then the master of ceremonies "does a soft shoe shuffle to centre stage, . . . stops, looks out, raises his arms, pauses for a beat, and makes a large but simple bow." This foregrounding of the audience is designed to make it acutely aware of itself as a literal confirmation of the truth of the events depicted in the play. How can a Canadian audience reject the proffered role of idly curious uninvolved passersby without having to consider the predominance of caucasians in its own composition? As an audience we are alienated from our automatic acceptance of the predominance of "the White Race" in our country: it didn't just happen; choices were made and continue to be made to maintain it. The play forces us to either criticize or justify this state of affairs: we cannot take it for granted.

Sharon Pollock says something very illuminating in her "playwright's note": "As a Canadian, I feel that much of our history has been misrepresented and even hidden from us. Until we recognize our past, we cannot change our future." She is describing the function of the type of documentary play we are discussing now, which is to bring to our attention the hidden or ignored events that have created our present reality and to use them to bring that reality to our consciousness in the immediate present time of the performance.

In *1837: The Farmers' Revolt*,<sup>18</sup> as in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the principal side of the relation between the actual event and the theatrical event is the latter. The past is re-enacted for the purpose of alienating the present. As in

*Paper Wheat*, an element of performance is foregrounded in order to create a tension with the factual subject matter. Here that element is a self-conscious theatricality.

The “flamboyantly theatrical gesture”<sup>19</sup> has always been the signature of Theatre Passe Muraille. Indeed *1837* fairly bristles with it. But the play does more than simply inject theatricality into its account of historical events: it reads theatricality back into them. It treats its historical figures quite legitimately as actors on the stage of history, who invested their gestures with a larger-than-life, histrionic quality, acting both as agents and as actors in the assumption that their deeds would shape the destiny of a nation, and would form the core of events that their descendants would re-tell and re-enact as their myth of origin, the kind of subject that historical painters used to treat, and still do in some parts of the world: “Washington Crossing the Delaware,” for example. (It might be mentioned in passing that the historical painting we *did* get, picturing the fathers of confederation, is about as theatrical as a photograph of a boys’ hockey team.) The play is thick with incidents possessing this histrionic quality: Mackenzie addressing the patriots; Mackenzie and Van Egmond recruiting Tiger Dunlop; Van Egmond taking command of the rebel forces just when all seems lost; Mackenzie defying Colonel McNab from Navy Island (worthy of comparison with Castro in the hills, or Mao in retreat); and finally, the martyrdom of Lount and Matthews.

Of course, the irony that runs through the play is that none of these histrionic gestures has in fact reverberated through history. The central figures in the rebellion make their gestures in the vacuum of what did *not* come to pass. Dunlop was not recruited, Van Egmond arrived too late, Mackenzie left Navy Island for exile in the United States. As for the battle at Montgomery’s Tavern, it was “the first spontaneous mutual retreat in the history of warfare,”<sup>20</sup> a tragicomic anti-climax. Just when all seemed lost, all *was* lost.

Simultaneously, the play presents the deeds of the rebellion’s leaders as theatrical gestures played on the stage of history, and dismantles the stage. This ironic treatment is at its fullest in Lount’s speech on the scaffold. It was a brilliant idea to end the play with this execution, for by its nature the public execution of a political martyr is profoundly theatrical (as Marvell was perhaps the first to observe in his “Horatian Ode upon Cromwell’s Return from Ireland”). National myths give the dying statements of such figures a place of honour: what American hasn’t heard: “I only regret that I have but one life to lose for my country”? These flamboyantly theatrical gestures become exemplary models of a society’s most cherished values.

According to contemporary accounts, Lount and Matthews met their ends with exemplary dignity. What they did not do was address the crowd at the gallows. Theatre Passe Muraille assembled a gallows speech out of the things Lount is

recorded as saying in prison;<sup>21</sup> in effect they used documentary source material to amplify the inherent theatricality of that moment on the gallows.

My friends, I address as friends all those in the jail behind me, in all the jails across this province, in the ships bound for Van Diemen's Land, in exile in the United States — there are over eight hundred of us. I am proud to be one of you. John Beverly Robinson — Chief Justice Robinson — You seem to fear we will become martyrs to our countrymen. Well still your fears. This country will not have time to mourn a farmer and a blacksmith. It will be free, I am certain, long before our deaths have time to become symbols. It cannot remain long under the hell of such merciless wretches that they murder its inhabitants for their love of liberty. As for us, I do not know exactly how we came to this. Except by a series of steps each of which seemed to require the next. But if I were to leave my home in Holland Landing again, and march down Yonge Street, I would go by the same route, only hoping that the journey's end would differ. . . .

The theatricalization of Lount's words carries its own irony: a contemporary audience must admit with some pain that not only has Lount's death not become a symbol, it has never heard of Lount, and that his ringing prophecy of a Canada free of colonial dependency is a long way from being fulfilled a century and a half later. Sharon Pollock's observation about our hidden past could not find a better instance than the events of 1837.

The irony with which the play treats these histrionic gestures is given a further dimension by another kind of theatricality in the play. As well as showing individuals taking poses on the stage of history, the company reads back into the events of 1837 the use of theatre by groups of people to grasp and change their situation. Several episodes in particular do this. In the first, a farmer acts out the defeat of his hopes to purchase land, casting his friends in roles as he goes along. In the process, he and his friends become aware of the structure and mode of operation of the forces that oppress them and dispel the artificial fog of ideology through which the Family Compact hides its manipulations. In the second act we see the same farmer joining the rebellion. A piece of homemade theatre leads to critical awareness which leads to action. This process is evident in "The Dummy," in which "a couple of the folks" warm up a crowd waiting to hear Mackenzie with a skit featuring John Bull, the "imperial ventriloquist" and Peter Stump, the Canadian axeman. The skit develops the ventriloquist act as a metaphor for the imperial mentality of the mother country and the colonial mentality it engenders, and the end of the skit, in which the dummy finds his own voice, leads directly into Mackenzie's call for action. One of Mackenzie's editorials is made into a theatrical documentation of the closed circle of power in the colony by presenting Mackenzie as a conjurer transforming a "gang of thieves, rogues, villains and fools" one by one into "the ruling class of this province." A proclamation by Sir Francis Bond Head, governor, is recited by the actors who form a giant head out of their bodies.



The twentieth-century models for these portions of the play are not far to seek. Salutin calls the "Dummy" sketch "agitprop of '37." Weiss' definition of documentary theatre is particularly germane:

The strength of Documentary Theatre lies in its ability to shape a useful pattern from fragments of reality, to build a model of actual occurrences. It is not at the centre of events, it is in the position of spectator and analyst. It emphasizes, through montage, significant details in the chaos of external reality. Through the confrontation of contradictory details, it shows up existing conflicts. According to the underlying material it then makes a suggestion for a solution, or an appeal, or asks basic questions.<sup>22</sup>

Another model is the system developed by Augusto Boal, which he calls "Theatre of the Oppressed," whereby the oppressed are taught the language of the theatre in order to be empowered to use it to articulate and fully grasp their predicament, free themselves from the obscuring myths of the ruling class, and rehearse fundamental change.<sup>23</sup>

The contrast between these two modes of theatricality, the histrionic gestures of the leaders on the one hand and the use of theatre by groups of ordinary people to grasp their situation on the other, reinforces one of the major themes of the play: the contrast between the revolutionary energy of the working people (hence the subtitle "The Farmers' Revolt") and what Salutin terms "the unreliability and timidity of bourgeois leadership in a struggle for Canadian independence," which the play presents as a betrayal of that strength. Indeed, we can go a step further: the peoples' theatre that the company reads back into the past is not offered as a reflection of what might have been done then but as a model of what needs to be done now, and in fact *is* being done in every moment of the performance of 1837.

As in *The Komagata Maru Incident*, the principal side of the relation between the documented reality and the reality of the theatrical event is the latter. The source material effects an imaginative penetration of the here-and-now. In his preface to *1837*, Rick Salutin says: "It felt to me when we first put this show up in January of 1973, that we were expressing something of what was happening in the country at the time: a determination to throw off colonial submissiveness in all areas. *1837* was a theatrical expression of that feeling, making it more of a political event, and not just, or even primarily, a theatrical one." Like agitprop, and like Augusto Boal's "Theatre of the Oppressed," it was not a theatrical reflection of something else, but a political act in the mode of theatre. The events of 1837 were presented as a means of alienating the contemporary state of affairs. Salutin goes on to say that the revised version of 1974, which is the source of the printed text, "became more of a theatrical, and less of a political, event," reflecting the fact that "the nationalist, anti-imperialist impetus was still present, and *more* necessary than ever; but it was less fresh, was in a bit of a withdrawal."

This difference, however, is only a matter of degree. The published version is still very much a political event, and I imagine will continue to be so for some time to come. Consider the last few lines of the play:

MATTHEWS: *A bitter laugh.*

LOUNT: What Peter? What?

MATTHEWS: Sam, we lost —

LOUNT: No! We haven't won yet.

The play's status as a political event was enhanced by an underlying analogy between the larger political situation and the internal politics of the acting company. To quote Rick Salutin again: "Actors have been so infantilized. Writers tell them what to say and directors tell them where to stand and no one asks them to think for themselves. They come to work with Paul [Thompson] because they want to break that pattern, but then they freeze up. I remember my first horrified encounter with actors, during *Fanshen*. They were treating the play exactly as they would any other. . . . Like the mailman, they'd deliver anything. It shocked me that they were like any other group in the country, politically, that is. But the actors are also the real proletariat of the theatre. . . . They take shit from everyone else, and their labour holds it all up." The very process of creating the show contradicted the internal structure of directorial authority and actors' submission: Paul Thompson placed the emphasis on the collective process, playing a role much like the Mackenzie the company discovered: his function wasn't to impose his authority but to release the actors' own energy and will and resources.

Salutin himself insists that his role was similarly non-authoritarian: he was "the writer on — but not of — *1837*." The collective creation of the show was foregrounded *in* the show: it could not have been mistaken for a play written and directed in the conventional way.

Certain elements of the performance of *1837* were vehicles by which the non-authoritarian process of creating the play was conveyed to the audience. One is the clear emphasis on a collective protagonist, matched by the absence of any distribution of leading and secondary roles among the performers. The actor who played Mackenzie, a part which might appear to make both the actor and the historical figure dominate the show, played a large number of minor roles in other scenes, thus effectively pulling both his performance and the character back into the context of the ensemble performance in the present and of the popular movement in the past. This absence of fixed roles in a hierarchical order characterized all the performances, to the extent that women played male roles in several scenes, while a man played the ineffable colonist, Lady Backwash. The loose, episodic structure of the show likewise conveyed the sense of a collective at work. Although the placing of individual scenes produced frequent ironic effects through montage, the whole still appeared to be oddly and sometimes surprisingly put together.

These elements permit the collective creation of the play to be visible in the theatre, where it functions as an effective contrast to the failed collective effort of the past and as a theatrical analogy of the collective creation of an independent nation which the play calls for in the present.

The plays that we have examined are remarkable for their fusion of the most serious concern for what really happened and the most profound attention to the reality of the moment in the theatre when actors and audience encounter each other. The distinction between these two realities, maintained by the overtly presentational mode of performance, is like the potential difference in an electric field. If the energy is sufficient, a spark leaps across the gap, and an audience apprehends that not only is something important being said but that something important is happening, here and now, in their presence. It is this accomplishment that makes these instances of documentary theatre a significant contribution to the growth of Canadian drama, and indeed, a significant contribution to the critical understanding of the genre.

## NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Gregory Mason, "Documentary Drama from the Revue to the Tribunal," *Modern Drama*, 20 (1977), p. 263.
- <sup>2</sup> Peter Cheeseman, "Introduction," *The Knotty: A Musical Documentary* (London: Methuen, 1970), p. vii.
- <sup>3</sup> Diane Bessai, "Documentary Theatre in Canada: An Investigation into Questions and Backgrounds," *Canadian Drama/L'Art Dramatique Canadien*, 6 (Spring 1980), pp. 13-14.
- <sup>4</sup> Peter Weiss, "The Material and the Models. Notes Towards a Definition of Documentary Theatre," trans. Heinz Bernard, *Theatre Quarterly*, 1 (January-March 1971), 41-43.
- <sup>5</sup> Bertolt Brecht, "A Short Organum for the Theatre" in *Brecht on Theatre*, ed. and trans. John Willett (New York: Hill and Wang, 1964), pp. 179-205.
- <sup>6</sup> Northrop Frye, "Conclusion" to *Literary History of Canada*, ed. Carl F. Klinck et al., 2nd ed. (Toronto: Univ. of Toronto Press, 1976), II, 338.
- <sup>7</sup> Paul Gray, "A Living World: An Interview with Peter Weiss," *TDR*, 11 (Fall 1966), 108.
- <sup>8</sup> Peter Brook, "Introduction" in *Tell Me Lies*, ed. Michael Kustow et al. (Indianapolis: Bobbs Merrill, 1968), p. 9.
- <sup>9</sup> *Brecht on Theatre*, p. 136.
- <sup>10</sup> See Keir Elam, *The Semiotics of Theatre and Drama* (London: Methuen, 1980), p. 126.
- <sup>11</sup> Taken from the soundtrack of *The Clinton Special* (1974), a film directed by Michael Ondaatje.
- <sup>12</sup> 25th Street House Theatre, *Paper Wheat*, in *Canadian Theatre Review*, 17 (Winter 1978), 38-92.
- <sup>13</sup> Elam, pp. 16-19.

- <sup>14</sup> Don Kerr, "Paper Wheat: Epic Theatre in Saskatchewan," in *Paper Wheat: The Book* (Saskatoon: Western Producer Prairie Books, 1982), p. 30.
- <sup>15</sup> Cf. Peter Cheeseman: "As the actor is the means of exposing factual material he must have a totally candid and honest basic relationship with the audience to start with. It is almost as if this permitted the audience to trace on him the shape of each character when they could see it so clearly standing out against his own openness" (*The Knotty*, pp. xvii-xviii).
- <sup>17</sup> Sharon Pollock, *The Komagata Maru Incident* (Toronto: Playwrights Canada, 1978).
- <sup>18</sup> Rick Salutin and Theatre Passe Muraille, *1837: William Lyon Mackenzie and the Canadian Revolution* (Toronto: Lorimer, 1976).
- <sup>19</sup> Chris Johnson, "The Farm Show," *Canadian Literature*, no. 85 (Summer 1980), p. 132. See also my essay, "The Meeting of Actuality and Theatricality in *The Farm Show*," *Canadian Drama/L'Art Dramatique Canadien*, 8 (Spring 1982) 42-54.
- <sup>20</sup> Dennis Lee, *Civil Elegies* (Toronto: Anansi, 1972), p. 32.
- <sup>21</sup> See Charles Lindsay, *The Life and Times of William Lyon Mackenzie, 1862*, I, 190-91, and J. C. Dent, *The Upper Canada Rebellion, 1885*, II, 249-50.
- <sup>22</sup> Weiss, p. 42.
- <sup>23</sup> Augusto Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed*, trans. Charles A. and Maria Odilia Leal McBride (New York: Urizen, 1979).

## TWO POEMS

*Dianne Joyce*

### THE LULL

This is the second time  
I've lived in this house  
familiar and empty

walls turned in on  
themselves leaning like death  
towards a centre

impossible to stay here  
though to you I suppose  
everything looks normal  
    an ordinary monday  
    and me not dressed  
    watching the neighbours  
    veer off into bright traffic