PRINCIPAL WITNESS: HERBERT WHITTAKER
AND
CANADIAN DRAMA, 1949-1975

by

Richard Russell Hanson

A thesis submitted in conformity with the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy,
Graduate Centre for Study of Drama, in the
University of Toronto

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0-612-41549-X
ABSTRACT

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In his career as a reviewer and columnist for The Globe and Mail in Toronto from 1949 to 1975, Herbert Whittaker became arguably the most important critical figure in the history of Canadian theatre. This thesis attempts to define Whittaker as a principal witness of his time by examining his work and considering the sensitivity and knowledge that he brought to his reviews of Canadian and international plays. During these years at The Globe and Mail, Whittaker reviewed most of the plays and productions in Canadian theatre history that helped to produce an identifiably Canadian theatre. Critics have generally agreed that at the beginning of this period Canadian theatre was amateurish and derivative, but by the early 1970s had become much more professional and distinctively Canadian, attracting larger audiences. The theatre of this later period made a lasting contribution to the arts in Canada and extended beyond the Canadian border in its influence.

As a child, Whittaker attended plays in Montreal and London,
England. He developed his ability as a theatre designer through art classes, and as a designer and director through extensive work in little theatre in Montreal and later in Toronto. Whittaker's background, along with a genuine passion for art and interest in dramatists, directors and actors, enhanced his critical skills and made him much more than a journalist working his 'beat'. He continually adapted his point of view to the changing times in Canadian theatre.

In the 1950s in Canada, the Massey Report became the cornerstone of arts policies and procedures and many of its recommendations were followed. The Stratford Festival, the National Theatre School, a strong body of professional repertory theatres throughout the regions of Canada, and many alternative theatre companies changed the face of Canadian theatre. Also, in the period under examination in this thesis, Canadians wrote and produced plays that allowed Canadians to see and study themselves in new and sometimes challenging ways. Whittaker monitored these developments and more in his long career and did so with thoroughness, insight and dedication.
Acknowledgements

I would like to express my sincerest appreciation to my supervisor, Ronald Bryden, for his inspiring critical comments and unwavering support.

I would also like to thank the members of my committee, Ann Saddlemyer and Richard Plant for their dedication to me and this thesis.

Thank you to Herbert Whittaker for two memorable interviews in Toronto in the summer of 1993.

I am grateful to The Globe and Mail and staff members of the Robarts Library, the Toronto Metropolitan Central Library, the Archives of Ontario and the York University Archives.

I am especially indebted to my wife, Janet Fraser, whose support and personal sacrifices enabled me to see this project through to completion.
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Introduction

I have chosen as the subject of my thesis Herbert William Whittaker's career as a theatre journalist at The Globe and Mail in Toronto from 1949 to 1975, a period in which Whittaker reviewed most of the significant theatre productions in Canada. My title originates in Ronald Bryden's suggestion in Whittaker's Theatre that Whittaker "might be called the principal witness to the most important decades" of Canada's theatre history, "the years in which the theatre in Canada evolved into the Canadian theatre." (By that, Bryden means a theatre in which Canadian actors perform Canadian plays, "for the most part," in professional Canadian theatres.) My thesis will outline Whittaker's contribution as an 'impressionistic' reviewer and conscientious reporter, whose work can provide a valuable framework for theatre scholars studying the period.

In an article called "Canadian Theatre Criticism", published in 1985, Whittaker described Canadian theatre critics historically as 'crusaders' for cultural survival. He differentiated between two types of critics and criticism, "life's blood" and 'academic'. He described "life's blood" criticism as "that which reflects the day-to-day achievements or failures in current theatrical expression." On the other hand,

the academic critic is allowed a more historical perspective, watching for the trends taken by that expression. While the daily working critic feels part of the daily creativity, clinging precariously to his objectivity, the periodical critics must look for overall developments, making note of similar trends in time and place.

By these definitions, Whittaker was essentially a daily
working critic. He wrote "life's blood" criticism for newspapers and his output of 'academic' criticism for periodicals other than newspapers has been relatively small. He held certain personal beliefs about his role as reviewer at The Globe and Mail and The Montreal Gazette. He described these beliefs in an interview conducted by Don Rubin for the Ontario Historical Studies Project in 1975. In response to Rubin's query as to "his own feelings about criticism as [he approached] the whole role of the critic working today in Canada," Whittaker stated:

I am somebody who is devoted to developing a theatre in this country because I like theatre and feel that a country is not a country without it. A nation is not a nation without its own expression in theatre and art. To that end, I've been something of a propagandist, always pushing the theatre. I am delighted that there is more and more to push and perhaps The Globe and Mail's efforts have helped in that.  

Whittaker believed that he could play an encouraging role toward Canadian drama, particularly in the emergence of new Canadian drama written and produced during the years he worked at The Globe and Mail. This adds to his importance as a critic because the 'alternate' theatre movement in Canada took place towards the end of his career at that newspaper and "the most important development of that movement [was] the emergence and public recognition of the Canadian playwright." Whittaker's tendency to 'push' the theatre was also motivated in part by a reality of newspaper journalism - that to maintain space in the paper, a writer had to diligently search for material. He explained when interviewed by Rubin that

I saw as many plays as anybody would put on. I was fighting for and defending that space. If you work in a newspaper, you
understand that space is something that you have to maintain, otherwise other copy closes in. So that you have to keep coming up with copy and make it interesting so as to maintain a constant space for your beat...if you cover a beat, you have to maintain a lively source. 8

Whittaker's background in English Montreal gave him a connection to theatre of the Victorian era and familiarized him with Canada's colonial heritage, and this significantly influenced his development as a critic. In "Canadian Theatre Criticism", he emphasized the importance of touring productions to the survival of theatre in Canada:

Reflecting a country which, being sparsely populated, clung to colonial ways long after independence came with Confederation in 1867, our stages favored touring companies from outside for over half a century. The fact that we have a theatre at all, in a century of electronic substitutes, is partly owed to the thousands of touring players who visited from Britain, France and the United States, countries whose activity easily overshadowed our own. 9

In Rubin's 1975 interview of Whittaker, Whittaker said:

I was lucky enough to have been born when the last of the great touring companies from England and the United States and the final vestiges of the stock company system were in operation. Thus, I am able to claim (though not with any degree of perceptive accuracy) to have seen Mrs. Fiske play Ghosts (that's Minnie Maddern Fiske -- a considerable pioneer in the field); Sir John Martin-Harvey playing Hamlet, my first Hamlet, The Only Way and The Lyons' Mail, great roles that he'd inherited from Irving. So there was a line drawn back to the great Victorian theatre. And then there were the Americans -- the American Opera Company, which took a revolutionary new approach to opera, with settings by Robert Edmond Jones, and people like George Arliss.... 10

These experiences not only gave Whittaker insight into British and American touring theatre but also provided him with opportunities early in his life to study non-naturalistic styles in theatrical production. He developed a broad understanding of theatrical history and a knowledge of performance styles and was thus equipped
to assess the importance of developments in the Canadian theatre as they took place.

After attending many British and American touring productions in Montreal, Whittaker understood that these productions provided background for the development of English-language Canadian drama. In Montreal, he saw that "very few French companies came from Paris" compared to English-language touring productions, and he explained that as a result

when the French spirit rose, it created its own theatre through people like Gratien Gélinas...and presented an extraordinarily compact representation of its own life, its own culture in theatrical terms, cut off as they were from the surrounding terrain. 12

As a critic in Montreal, Whittaker saw the excitement of this movement. In "Canadian Theatre Criticism" he wrote:

Both 'life's blood' and academic critics joined in Quebec's drive for its not-so-quiet Revolution. They had been prepared, over a decade or more, for such crusading by observing the work of pioneers like Gratien Gélinas, Yvette Brind'Amour, Jean Gascon, Jean-Louis Roux, Pierre Dagenais and Marcel Dubé. As drama critic for the Gazette, I could bear witness to that growing excitement. 13

Similar developments in Canada's English-language theatre took much longer to come about, however, and Whittaker thought that

despite the long-time encouragement of the drama festivals, the urging of the critics, and such annual contests as the Ottawa Little Theatre One-Act Play Competition, English-language writers did not feel sufficiently confident to take to the stage in large numbers until the 1970s. 14

Whittaker saw himself as a crusader for Canadian theatre and drama and he pointed out an important difference between French and English Canada. "In French Canada...the cause of nationalism often
came first," he said. "In English Canada, the state of the art was still of prime concern."

After World War II, Whittaker knew that "the end was in view for Montreal as a major touring city." His Majesty's Theatre was the main theatre in Montreal in which English-language touring productions were staged. It was eventually demolished in 1963 but its life as a touring house had begun to wane years before it actually closed in the 1950s. On the other hand, Whittaker saw that "Toronto...never lost its position as part of the American road theatre" and he believed that "in some ways that has been a handicap to the original creation if you contrast the two cities." He explained:

In fact, in Toronto, because we were always so successful for touring companies (mainly from the United States) meant that the contrast was always in favour of the professional tours rather than the local effort. It took a longer time and has taken a longer time for the English language theatre in Toronto to match the French language theatre in Quebec.

Whittaker was interested in the Royal Alexandra as a theatre that staged British and American touring productions and this was the main motive behind his relocation from Montreal to Toronto in 1949.

Keeping in mind that English-language theatre was far behind French-language theatre in Canada, how was Whittaker to continue to crusade for a national expression in theatre and art while making his living reviewing shows that were at times a handicap to national development? Whittaker led a "double...life" and this allowed him to reconcile these two factors. Bryden explains:

Long before he became a critic on a regular basis, he had distinguished himself as a designer and director of amateur productions in Montreal.... Long after he had become the
country's leading critic, too, he continued to direct and design, for professionals as well as amateurs, in Toronto. 20

Whittaker explained to Rubin that his "mother's family had been goldsmiths, members of a guild of goldsmiths and reputed to have had a shop on old London Bridge." He believed that he "had inherited from the family some facility as a graphic artist which later took [him] to the Beaux Arts in Montreal." Whittaker's post-secondary education was in fine arts and he did not attend university. After studying at l'École des Beaux Arts, he began designing productions done by the Church of the Messiah in Montreal, a subsidiary group, the Sixteen Thirty Club, and the Montreal Repertory Theatre.

Whittaker, in the article "Canadian Theatre Criticism", wrote that when touring theatre declined in Canada because of the Depression and steadily increasing freight rates, "the country was forced to depend on local talent." When the Dominion Drama Festival was created in 1933, however, a great deal of interest in local talent was stimulated in Canada. Whittaker pointed out that it was "instituted...with the support of the Earl of Bessborough, then Governor General" and argues that it was "a truly indigenous theatre" because it "drew our performers in competition from across the country." By the time the Dominion Drama Festival was created, Whittaker had become involved with the Montreal Repertory Theatre as a stage-hand, assisting in the 1932 production of Hamlet and 1933 production of Romeo and Juliet, both designed by Bessborough. By the time he relocated to Toronto in 1949, he had won a number of awards for directing and designing. Whittaker's
successes in the Dominion Drama Festival served him well when he moved to Toronto. Bryden explains:

[Toronto's] tiny but lively theatre community offered the nearest local approximation to the gaieties of Montreal, and Whittaker's reputation, established at a long string of Dominion Drama Festivals, opened its doors to him. Within a year of his migration to the Globe, he was directing college shows at the University of Toronto and designing sets for the four-year-old New Play Society. 25

Whittaker explained that his work as a journalist "was quite closely knit to my work in the theatre." He said:

Neither of the two papers I've worked with have ever opposed me continuing in the field of directing or design, but I was leading a double and sometimes triple life -- designing one production, directing another and going around criticising all the others. 27

The fact that Whittaker could lead this double or triple life at The Montreal Gazette and The Globe and Mail crucially affected his development as a critic. Bryden explains that amateur theatre training for a critic teaches him what professionalism is: what it is that amateurs, however gifted, can never rise to, which a professional may make look so easy that no layman thinks of it as acting. Its disadvantage, from a journalistic point of view, is that it teaches the critic too much to allow simple, easy judgements. 28

Whittaker's experience as a director and designer in Dominion Drama Festival competition, combined with his work as a professional critic, allowed him to see clearly and comment with authority on important progressions in the Canadian theatre. For example:

Moving from a period where the greatest artistic achievement in Canada's theatre had been done on a community level through the Dominion Drama Festival, the Stratford Festival came and swung it to a high professional level.... So what it started with was what the Dominion Drama Festival had encouraged; that need for professional theatre. 29
In "Canadian Theatre Criticism" Whittaker stated his belief that the Dominion Drama Festival "was the closest Canada came to a national theatre," but he explains that "being non-professional, it could not survive in the face of the progress of which it was part." Whittaker believed that one of the most important aspects of the Stratford Festival was that it "encouraged the need for a theatre that was perhaps more indigenous than the DDF kind of operation by enlisting pioneers like Guthrie and Langham."

Whittaker's "double life" also taught him to recognize important differences between community and professional theatres and to value the merits of each. Bryden argues that "a major motive" behind his continuing his directing and design work in Toronto "was to keep abreast of new kinds of theatre which had not yet filtered down to the professional stages he spent most of his evenings watching." Bryden gives a number of examples of pioneering productions in which Whittaker was involved in Toronto: Galileo for the Jupiter Theatre in 1951, Endgame for the University of Toronto Alumnae Dramatic Club in 1959, The Caretaker in 1964 at the Central Library Theatre. When asked by Rubin which of the productions that he directed at the Crest were among his personal favourites, Whittaker listed Bright Sun at Midnight by John Gray and Chekhov's The Three Sisters, The Cherry Orchard and Uncle Vanya. "They were of high calibre," he said, "because they were artistic creations."

Whittaker understood the need for the community theatres to strive towards a more professional standard. He knew that this was
part of maintaining the theatres and bringing about the national expression in theatre and art that he believed was necessary in Canada. He thought Robert Gill's contribution in this respect was 'enormous'. Gill, "a spirited young acting instructor from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh," became the artistic director of Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto in 1946. Whittaker said that Gill "trained and gave his actors a sense of professionalism which was lacking in the community theatres, or other art theatres across the country." At the same time, Whittaker saw that a professional theatre could perish if it became exclusively concerned with its professionalism. He explained to Rubin that the Crest Theatre was "fundamentally designed for weekly stock...and having sold subscriptions, it was incapable of taking advantage of a hit show." The Crest ran for a total of thirteen years, but in 1964, three seasons before it closed altogether, its Canada Council grant was withdrawn.

Whittaker commented:

I think, perhaps, the Crest really closed because it had run its course, in a sense, certainly as far as the guiding family were concerned. More than that, there was an antagonism represented by that withdrawal of the Canada Council grant when a certain contingent of people felt that the Crest should be more of an art theatre, more of a sincere theatre, high standards and not bother with the stock company shows as well. Whittaker explained to Rubin that the concept of the stock company system, "inherited from England, was to build a company of trained actors who could play any variety of things and were always in work." While he was familiar with this system from Montreal as a vestige of Canada's colonial theatre heritage, Whittaker
admitted to Rubin that he himself was not entirely in favour of the stock theatre professionalism of the Crest. He thought it was "a fundamental weakness" of the company. "I must have criticized the policy," he said, "because as I kept saying in the Globe and Mail, its stock company things were not obviously to my liking. I felt they could have trusted more in the stronger plays." While the Crest theatre in Toronto lost Canada Council funding and ultimately closed because of failings as an art theatre, plans to construct the St. Lawrence Centre, "a municipal art theatre" for Toronto, were almost thwarted. Whittaker pointed out to Rubin that "the St. Lawrence Centre inherited a lot of the Ontario prejudices which had been battled by such stalwarts [as] Dora Mavor Moore and the Davis family."

There seemed to be one formula for theatrical practice that would both ensure the survival of the theatre in Canada and allow it to evolve into a distinctively Canadian theatre. As a result, debate as to whether theatre artists should be guided by a philosophy of art for art's sake, or whether they should concentrate on developing their skills as artists and attaining high standards in their work, prevailed in the era during which Whittaker wrote for The Globe and Mail. Because of his "double life", Whittaker was in a position in the middle of this debate. On the one hand, he realized that practitioners in Canada needed to strive towards professional standards to ensure the survival of the theatre. On the other hand, Whittaker saw the need for theatre practitioners in Canada to derive inspiration from new developments
in international theatre practice and playwriting, and not only to experiment with them but also to develop their own new forms of expression in theatres at home. Developments that were uniquely Canadian would be compared to international developments in art.

Initially, professional standards for a Canadian theatre in the 1950s could most readily (and would most obviously) be derived from the existing professional theatres elsewhere which Canadians knew best. As those theatres were in New York, London and Paris, where Canadians who cared about theatre did their theatregoing, professional standards for the Canadian theatre could be set by shows from those cities. This differed little from the situation during Canada's colonial history when the plays Canadians saw were shipped in from London and Paris. In the 1950s, however, it was a different, non-colonial phenomenon - our relationship to New York was that of a province to a metropolis.

Whittaker was primarily an impressionistic critic. Bryden says "he offered appraisal by description. He would set down, as fully and vividly as time and memory permitted, his impression of his evening at the theatre." In 1971, York University gave Whittaker an honorary doctorate and in his reception speech he explained his idea of reviewing:

To me a review is a series of impressions, adding up to an opinion, and having to compress it into one statement is anathema. That is why my reviews seem ambiguous. I don't believe you can issue flat statements about the creative effort of a group of people that will satisfy a variety of readers.

This impressionistic approach, the most distinguishing characteristic of Whittaker's criticism, seemed to satisfy his
readers but he also used other methods to engage their interest. From his earliest visits to the theatre, he was impressed by famous international stars. He recognized that stars drew people into the theatre, regardless of current trends in playwriting and design. He also recognized that reviews of stars' performances and articles about them helped to sell the newspapers for which he wrote. Stars contributed to overall excellence in the theatre and from the time he was very young Whittaker exhibited a personal pride in actors of Canadian birth who achieved success in other countries. He eventually became dedicated in his professional life to keeping track of their achievements. In "Whittaker's Montreal: A Theatrical Autobiography, 1910-1949", published in 1986, he recalled:

When I became a newspaper columnist, I remembered to chronicle as many achievements of Canadians abroad as I could until these were finally equalled by Canadian actors acting in Canada. 46

Whittaker followed and promoted the work of Canadian talents such as John Colicos and Kate Reid and let his readers know if and when their performances met international standards. Throughout his career he promoted both international and Canadian stars as part of his program for ensuring the existence of live theatre in Canada and encouraging national expression through theatre and art.

From his childhood exposure to theatre onwards, Whittaker was inspired and "mightily influenced" by the work of famous designers like Edward Gordon Craig and Robert Edmond Jones, and he tried to emulate their work in his own production designs. He never stopped reminding his readers of the achievements of Tanya Moiseiwitsch, who designed the stage for the Stratford Festival.
Whittaker was especially impressed by non-naturalistic designs and recognized their imaginative potential and the possibilities they provided for exploring different forms of theatrical expression.

In 1975, Whittaker told Rubin that "there are many audiences in this town where at one time, when I first came, there was one audience and the audience was moved from place to place, from New Play Society to Jupiter to the Royal Alex and so on back to the Drama Festivals." For most of his career at The Globe and Mail, Whittaker was confident that discussions of stage stars and the work of great designers (things so central to the business of theatre) could help hold the "one audience" together.

On July 1, 1967, the day of Canada's centennial, Whittaker, in his column in The Globe and Mail used the phrase "living theatre", in the context of the survival of the theatre. After an analysis of such developments as the Stratford Festival, regional theatres, attempts by theatres and theatre companies in Toronto such as Hart House, the New Play Society, and the Canadian Players to provide an indigenous theatre, and the continuing relevance of the Royal Alexandra Theatre, Whittaker "summed up the situation" theatrically and dramatically:

We find the instincts for living theatre surviving both the colonial and electronic eras to move into a new position peculiarly suited to this country, supported by its government and prepared for by a century of pioneering. Our dramatists are being paid attention to as never before. There is every hope that in the second century of Confederation we will approach the establishment of a national theatre, with something to export, something to show visitors, but more important, something to express the various temperaments and complexities which constitute this country to itself as national audience.
In this article, Whittaker stressed the importance of the regional theatres in cities such as Winnipeg, Montreal, Vancouver, Halifax, Edmonton and Charlottetown, to the survival of living theatre in Canada.

The 'one' majority audience eventually split to form the many audiences to which Whittaker referred, and this took place most noticeably during his career in the late 1960s when the alternate movement developed momentum. In an essay entitled "The Alternate Theatre Movement", published in 1985, Renate Usniani explains:

The Canadian alternative theatre movement shared with its American and European counterparts a strong political orientation.... What distinguished it from parallel movements in other countries, however, is a passionate and militant nationalism.

In Canada, alternate companies set themselves up in protest against the 'colonial' attitudes of the directors of regional theatres; it was felt the regionals offered no scope for growth or development to Canadian playwrights, and were unwilling to risk departure from forms of production tried and tested elsewhere. 51

Theatre practitioners in the alternate theatre movement in Canada also "rebelled against the fact that the nation's showcase theatre should be located in Stratford and feature Shakespearean productions rather than Canadian plays." Clearly, they were opposed to most of the developments in Canadian theatre that Whittaker had supported in his criticism and contributed to in his practical work in the Canadian theatre. At the same time, however, many of the central ideas of the alternate movement came from European and American sources with which Whittaker was not unfamiliar. His "double life" had given him extensive knowledge of
and experience working with new forms of theatrical expression. Most importantly, by the time the alternate movement occurred in Canada, Whittaker had had as much experience as it was possible to have reviewing and producing new Canadian plays. While it is easy and accurate to associate him with the mainstream theatre establishment to which the alternate movement in Canada was so much in opposition, it is also possible to associate him with some of the aims of the alternate movement. His impressionistic critical style was suited to both 'mainstream' and 'alternate' Canadian theatre. For these reasons, I will examine Whittaker's Globe and Mail reviews in an attempt to locate his position in the ongoing debate as to what path Canadian theatre artists should pursue.

Whittaker's importance to the evolving Canadian theatre lies to a certain extent in the fact that he was "chronicler for the most serious English newspapers in the country's two largest cities." In Montreal, Whittaker was influenced by S. Morgan-Powell, who gave him a journalistic connection to theatre of the Victorian era. When Whittaker began working at The Globe and Mail, the paper was entering "the final years of a brilliant administration and ownership," that of George McCullagh. It was during the time that McCullagh owned the paper that it "pioneered technological change in Canada's newspapers." McCullagh died in 1952 and Richard J. Doyle explains in an article published in 1996:

It was not until a new owner, Howard Webster, gave a new publisher, Oakley Dalgleish, the backing he needed that
The Globe began its climb to reasonable prosperity. It was done not by hiring established writers and artists to catch the attention of non-subscribers, but through patient development of its own cast of names showcased in attractive departments. Bureaus abroad, women's news!, youth coverage, expanded entertainment and book sections— but none so important or so successful as the launch, one day at a time, of Report on Business.

It was the start of The Globe's long drive to put together its own kind of newspaper and to extend its circulation service across the country wherever potential Globe readers might be waiting. 56

Whittaker's career at The Globe and Mail was shaped by these developments and his influence grew because of them.

Whittaker's column, 'Showbusiness', reported on the business of the theatre. In "Canadian Theatre Criticism", Whittaker stressed the fact that, historically, Canadian theatre critics have been involved in one way or another in the theatre profession and that this continues to be an inevitability in their work. In this 1985 article, he argued:

While there is not one uniform set of critical standards applied across the country, it is apparent that the Canadian critic today has inherited the position of concern from Canada's critics of the previous generations. Again one sees the tendency to side with the emergent theatre against its public. This has been, if anything, increased by the attitudes of government to culture, ambivalent to say the least. 57

Here, Whittaker presented the case that for this reason, and because traditionally a newspaper has its critic serve as 'the reporter on the beat'...expected to handle all aspects of artistic activity, including government cuts in subsidy and resultant financial crises...the critic, more often than not, becomes involved with the personalities of the theatre he reviews. He becomes evaluator, announcer, publicist, bookkeeper, champion and father-confessor of our theatre. No wonder he tends to identify with the stage rather than the audience, or his newspaper, or broadcast station. 58
Having become *The Globe and Mail*’s reporter on the business of theatre, Whittaker became necessarily the public’s watchdog on the financial stake it held in Canadian theatre in the form of government subsidies. He was critical perhaps of individual management enterprises but committed to wishing success for the business in general since he and everyone else in the country held shares, so to speak, in our publicly supported arts. At the same time, Whittaker emphasized that not only he, but also other Toronto newspaper critics (Nathan Cohen, Urjo Kareda, Gina Mallet, Ray Conlogue) all became involved in one way or another in the profession other than as critics. He said that "such involvement...is part of the history of theatre criticism in this country." 59

In my thesis, I will treat Whittaker’s work as a designer/director and his general theatre journalism as centrally important to his career as a critic. He never ceased to lead his double life during his career as a journalist. His involvement in the theatre was enhanced by a natural tendency "to see things as if on a stage more easily than others." This, combined with a personal belief that "a play can only be judged on the stage," gave him an intimate knowledge and insight into theatrical craft and the ways and workings of "the last, most secretive of the craft guilds." I will focus my thesis on Whittaker as a "principal witness" to the evolving Canadian theatre, using as central reference points Bryden’s term and statements Whittaker made when interviewed by Rubin. He said that as a critic you witness a theatre performance. I think you must reflect that quality of performance as well as examine the script and
the content of the work and estimate the production values. I think that it is an important matter, reflecting the actual achievement of the theatre, of far greater importance than is given credit for. The real values of criticism that you find in historical research are the pieces that capture not only the kind of plays, but the feeling of a performance. 63

When Rubin asked Whittaker whether theatrical criticism existed when he was developing or at the time he started, Whittaker replied: "Of course, there has always been theatrical criticism. It changes as journalism changes from decade to decade." For the most part, then, the thesis chapters will be structured around the decades during which Whittaker worked for The Globe and Mail. In addition to this introduction, there will be six chapters. The first will be biographical, examining his background in Montreal to determine what he learned about the theatre and theatrical criticism before he moved to Toronto. In this chapter I will also discuss what he learned from mentors in Montreal, particularly S. Morgan-Powell and Charles Rittenhouse, and the ways in which he was influenced by foreign critics, especially the American critics, Brooks Atkinson, George Jean Nathan and Alexander Woollcott, and England's James Agate of The Sunday Times. I will also briefly compare Montreal and Toronto and discuss Nathan Cohen's influence on Whittaker. In 1948, Cohen began announcing for CBC radio and did a number of shows on both radio and television in which he discussed plays and productions. From 1957 to 1958 he was the Toronto Telegram's weekly theatre critic and from 1959 to 1965, drama critic and Entertainment Editor for the Toronto Star, and its drama critic until his death in 1971.

In the second chapter I will discuss the state of criticism in
Canada in the post-World War II era. I will begin with a discussion of the relevant material in the Report released in 1951 by the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, generally referred to as the Massey Report. Then I will discuss relevant writings by Robertson Davies, E.K. Brown and Northrop Frye, three Canadian critics concerned with the nature and function of criticism.

In the third chapter I will analyze a selection of Whittaker's reviews of English, French, American and Canadian productions covering the period 1949-1959. The purpose of this analysis will be to show what the distinguishing characteristics of Canadian plays, acting, and productions were at the time. I will attempt to determine what Whittaker thought Canadians had already achieved theatrically and dramatically, and what they needed to learn and what they could reject from abroad.

In the fourth chapter I will complete a similar analysis of Whittaker's reviews from the period 1960-1966 in an attempt to determine what he thought Canadians were achieving theatrically and dramatically, and whether or not they still needed to look to outside sources to stimulate and guide development.

In the fifth chapter I will examine a selection of Whittaker's reviews from 1967 to 1975, which represent his reception of post-Centennial Canadian drama. In the sixth and final chapter of my thesis I will attempt to determine what Whittaker's reviewing style revealed about his attitudes towards the theatre, and make concluding statements.
Notes


2 Bryden ix.


4 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 340.

5 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 340.


8 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 21-22.

9 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 338.

10 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 1-2.

11 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 17.

12 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 17.

13 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 341.

14 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 342.

15


Bryden xv.


Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 338.

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52  Usmiani 49.
53  Bryden ix.
57  Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 343.
58  Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 343-344.
59  Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 344.
61  Bryden 23.
62  Bryden xiv.
63  Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 74-75.
64  Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 13.
Chapter 1
Biography

In 1971, Whittaker revisited Montreal to write an article for The Globe and Mail about his impressions of the city past and present. The article, "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past", was published in The Globe Magazine on October 2. In this article Whittaker states matter-of-factly that The Gazette hired him "because I knew about theatre and films," and then, in 1949, The Globe and Mail hired him because of his reputation at The Gazette. In the later autobiographical fragment, "Whittaker's Montreal: A Theatrical Autobiography, 1910-1949" Whittaker reminisces about his education and experiences in the theatre in Montreal. An examination of these memoirs, along with the Ontario Historical Studies interview and Whittaker's Theatricals (a book of reminiscences published in 1993), enables us to understand his background and the influences that shaped his development as a critic.

Whittaker was born in Montreal on September 20, 1910. In "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past", he refers to his "first generation connection with England." In "Whittaker's Montreal", he describes his parents as "Londoners, accustomed to the theatre of a great city." He states that "it was taken for granted that theatre would be part of my life." His mother took him and his older brother on a trip to London and they were there at the onset of World War I. It was in London that his first visits to the theatre took place.

Whittaker's early response to live theatre was far from
passive. "My first pantomime was something to remember," he exclaims. "I was amazed when the Gates of Fairyland were flown up for the transformation scene." However literal this first exposure to the transforming magic of the theatre might have been, it stirred the young boy's imagination. Too young at the time to effect something so mechanical as a willing suspension of disbelief, his practical sense tempered his response. "Gates don't fly up," he recalls saying, "the young critic stirring pompously."

Whittaker was also taken to revues and music hall shows during those war years in London. He discovered that he had "an eye for talent", but in focusing on Elsie Janis and not on Maurice Chevalier in Hullo America!, he revealed that he had an eye for the work of a seasoned performer, which Janis was at the time, and which Chevalier was not. The development of his critical understanding of live theatre proceeded rapidly. Recalling a music hall programme that climaxed in a Living Statues act, Whittaker says,

I was particularly enchanted by the young lady who impersonated the Venus de Milo, especially when I discovered that the effect of the broken-off arms was a piece of stage-illusion. She wore black gloves of unequal length as she stood against the black velour curtains. Whittaker was 'enchanted' when he discovered how a designer could make an illusion.

"My war years were not spent entirely in theatres," Whittaker remarks. "I was also taken to the cinema, the silent cinema. My long affection for the winsome little Canadian girl, Mary Pickford, began at that time." It is notable that Whittaker's first
exposure to a famous star of Canadian birth took place in London. Perhaps it was her Canadianness that led him to prefer her to Lillian Gish and Charlie Chaplin. "I was downright embarrassed," he says, "by Lillian Gish forcing a smile in Broken Blossoms and by Charlie Chaplin's table manners." To qualify his response, he explains that "that was because I was still so young." The impressions had been made, however, and his interest had been stimulated. He not only became "dedicated to the living theatre at an early age," but he was also "much impressed by the films."

In 1918 Whittaker returned to Montreal. There, he lived in Westmount, and then in Outremont. In "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past", Whittaker tells us that he went to Alfred Joyce and Guy Drummond elementary schools. Afterwards, he went to Strathcona Academy and refers to it as "the high school of my youth, with behind it, in my imagination, the old, red-brick romantic schoolhouse with the poplars." The schools Whittaker attended were close to the houses he lived in. Westmount and Outremont were both suburbs but "close enough to Montreal's downtown theatres." He and his mother attended His Majesty's Theatre and the Princess Theatre, institutions which suggested English Canadians' attachment to the British crown. (A Canadian passport was not created until 1949.) A third theatre which Whittaker attended, The Orpheum (so named because it was part of the American Orpheum vaudeville circuit), was evidence of American theatrical influence in Montreal. His Majesty's and the Princess frequently hosted touring companies from England and it was at His
Majesty's Theatre that Whittaker saw his first production of *Hamlet*. In "Whittaker's Montreal", Whittaker says that this *Hamlet* was performed by Sir John Martin-Harvey and company on January 2, 1923, in accordance with the scenic principles of his fellow-member in Henry Irving's Lyceum Theatre company, Edward Gordon Craig. 16

The company Whittaker saw was Martin-Harvey's theatre company, for which Martin-Harvey had bought permission to use the Lyceum's name. Martin-Harvey's designs were "Craig-like" in that they were abstract. In *Whittaker's Theatricals*, Whittaker states that in this production soaring curtains replaced the stone painted walls. A great cyclorama backed every scene, with a low rising silhouette of battlements at its base, save where the sunken crosses of a graveyard were needed. 18

Clearly, seeing Martin-Harvey's production of *Hamlet* in Montreal in 1923 made Whittaker feel in touch with the great past of Irving's Lyceum Theatre.

If the twelve-year-old Whittaker had been 'amazed' and 'enchanted' by things he had seen onstage in London, he was 'overwhelmed' by Martin-Harvey's portrayal of *Hamlet* and his involvement was highly emotional. "As the curtain hits the floor of the stage," he exclaims, "I think my heart will burst!" 20 It is clear that the design for this production was non-realistic in conception and Whittaker remembers it as "truly poetic". In "Whittaker's Montreal", he refers to the "lasting impact" this production had on him and he describes how the designs stimulated his creative energy. "I came home to make maquettes of those
designs, colouring them in pastels," he says. "I treasured them, and they must have been what inspired me to design so ambitiously for the stage."

In Montreal, as in England, Whittaker's emotional response to live theatre when he was young was tempered by an analytical capability which gave him the distance he needed to formulate critical responses. "But was the future critic absent that day," he muses. "No, for as much as I was willing and able to accept the sixty-year-old Sir John as the young, distraught prince, I had strong reservations about his wife, Miss Nina de Silva, and her realization of Ophelia." Whittaker notes that Richard J. Doyle, his editor at The Globe and Mail, "was always amused by my need to have seen any notable production my readers might." Whittaker explains, though, that he was

influenced by what the veteran Montreal critic, S. Morgan-Powell, once said to me, 'Until you have seen Johnston Forbes-Robertson play Hamlet, you have not seen Hamlet!' Morgan-Powell made Forbes-Robertson's Hamlet a touchstone because his performance of Hamlet was by common consent of all the critics of the time the finest of his generation. Whittaker followed the example of senior critics of his time in comparing all new performances in classical roles with as many famous predecessors as possible. Doyle was amused by Whittaker's insistence on involving a theatrical past which could mean very little to most of his readers. However, Whittaker insisted on the necessity of historical comparisons in criticism, as opposed to the kind of showbusiness news and gossip which needs only the present
moment as its substance. While Whittaker saw many productions of Hamlet over the decades, a few with great talents in the leading role, he believes that it was that 1923 production starring Martin-Harvey that inspired him "in three different directions in the theatre," as designer, director and critic.

Whittaker also saw Martin-Harvey play David Garrick and Richard III and perform in productions of The Only Way, The Lyons Mail and The Bells. In The Lyons Mail, Martin-Harvey played a dual role which helped the young Whittaker expand his critical consciousness. In "Whittaker's Montreal" he says of this performance:

What a treat, and what an exercise for the young theatre-goer who had to learn to be moved, simultaneously but never exclusively, both by the performance and by the skill of the performance! That had to be credited to the critic's side of my ledger. 28

One wonders whether Whittaker at the age of fourteen discussed the plays he saw with his mother, the experienced theatregoer. In 1924, he said of The Bells, "This was one of Henry Irving's greatest successes. This is proof indeed of the great Irving personality, for the play is the weakest peg to hang great acting on, containing as it does not one well-rounded characterization besides the central one."

"In those early Montreal years," Whittaker notes in "Whittaker's Montreal", "I was generally attracted by the stars whose achievements were made more exciting by stage-direction which favoured and flattered them." He says that the star I recall most sharply was George Arliss, a dapper Englishman who had marked gifts as a high comedian which
suited him to the performance style then beginning to prevail. I remember him most vividly as Shylock in a 1928 company.... His Venetian Jew was a highly British individual, urbane, cynical, smiling, smacking his lips over the bargain he was making. His exit from the courtroom, falling as he went, was topped for me by a curtain-call which was the model of stage modesty. He was summoned after all the other players had taken their bows and departed the stage. His air of surprise, mingled with pleasure, was most effective. 31

Whittaker, then, was fascinated by actors and actresses both in and out of character. Such early experiences undoubtedly became the basis of his life-long fascination with the lives of performers. This fascination was heightened by the fact that he was able to see many of these same stars in films as well and also read about them in "such beguilements as movie magazines." If the stage-direction of the day was intended to favour and flatter the stars, the camera work of that era reinforced this practice. In "Whittaker's Montreal", however, Whittaker makes a distinction between his response to live theatre and his response to film:

I didn't give the cinema much of a chance to be its own art. I saw it as a substitute for the stage but a decade or so later I did sense that the screen was capable of making its own claims to be an independent art form. But by then I was on the verge of becoming a professional film critic. 33

"I still avoid Westerns as I would a Disney film," he says. "I preferred Old World romance." 34 When Whittaker began his career at The Globe and Mail, he reviewed more films than plays. However impressed he was by movies, though, and however involved he became as a film critic, he makes it clear that, primarily, he used them "as a substitute for the legitimate theatre."

Whittaker comments in "Whittaker's Montreal" on the fact that live theatre employed local actors as supernumeraries, whereas the
cinema was unable to do this. He points out that

The old trick of employing locals as supers has an effect few stars ever considered, I am sure, because the friends of the local supernumerary could be counted on to turn out with their attention usually rivetted on their friend. So it was when Michael MacLiammoir brought his play, *The Old Lady Says No!*, Montreal Dubliners turned out to admire Adelaide Smith, one of their own. 36

There were many Canadian film stars whom Whittaker proudly admired but they were never as accessible to him as those local stars he saw onstage in Montreal. "Both Marjorie Brewer and Adelaide Smith played Saint Joans in their home town," he says, "but were mere walk-ons in visiting shows." As walk-ons in plays with international touring stars, though, Canadian actors shone brightly in the eyes of local audiences.

Whittaker lists a number of 'expatriates' in "Whittaker's Montreal", actors and actresses who were born and first performed in Canada but who left the country and went on to become international stars. (In Whittaker's Theatricals, he conducts a more in-depth examination of the careers of a few of his favourites.) Occasionally, one would return in a touring production. In 1929 he delighted in Beatrice Lillie's performance in the Noel Coward revue *This Year of Grace*:

I had known nothing so wittily sung and danced in my life before, and the high, casual mockery of Coward certainly struck me. Miss Lillie, carrying the roles once shared with Coward's Gertie, was the high spirit of the occasion.... To learn that Beatrice Lillie was a native of Toronto (or maybe Huntsville or Cobourg, which she variously claimed), startled me and made me proud, just as I was proud to learn that Mary Pickford, Marie Dressler, and later Walter Huston and Raymond Massey were Canadians. 39

Whittaker gained more of "an appreciation of Canadian
talent" from *This Year of Grace*. He believed that the Noel Coward revue "opened up for me a whole world of wit and sophistication, undreamed of previously in Outremont." In "Whittaker's Montreal", Whittaker says he was "absolutely astonished by the Lillie comedy style, as well as by her material. For me, as for so many North Americans, here was a brand new sophistication, all cheerful innuendo and sly comment." He describes *This Year of Grace* as "inventing for us...a new kind of send-up of everything in sight - as much 'put-down' as 'send-up', something that later turned into 'camp'." This was another non-naturalistic style Whittaker had been able to study in his youth in Montreal. He remarks that "Arliss' rash of historical films suited my taste for costume drama."

Whittaker may have been impressed by the movies but the number and variety of performers he saw in Montreal indicate not only that his home city was a good theatre city but also that his appetite for live performance was insatiable:

Among the hordes of acrobats, musical clowns, condescending stage stars, comedians, jugglers, singers, dancers, and the performers of miniature farces which rotated on the great Keith, Albee and other circuits to appear in each town one week a year, there were some figures who came to Montreal who particularly entranced me. Bransby Williams, Cissie Loftus and other impersonators of the international greats, fitted my vaudeville bill most satisfyingly. 45

In those early Montreal years Whittaker developed an appreciation of traditional theatrical skills. "To this very day," he says, "I feel that impersonation, once a respected skill of the consummate actor, has been downgraded." Along with his experiences of pantomime and music hall fare in London, and opera
in Montreal, Whittaker, by the nineteen thirties had been exposed to almost every type of traditional live performance available. His theatregoing as a child and teenager in Montreal gave him an appreciation of older acting styles that were not common in Canada at the time he started at The Globe and Mail.

The final theatrical experience of his early youth that Whittaker discusses in "Whittaker's Montreal" is the visit of the American Opera Company to Montreal when he was seventeen. He describes Vladimir Rosing, the company's leader, as "a man with revolutionary ideas on opera," who "insisted that opera become more like music drama." Whittaker recalls that the company staged Madame Butterfly in a complete Japanese paper house, Carmen with clashing Futurist settings, a black and silver Marriage of Figaro, Pagliacci done in a modern midway and Faust made beautiful by the bold designs of Robert Edmond Jones. Whittaker recognized that he was "plainly more visually than aurally oriented," and because of this, he "retained even more joy from Jones' creations than [he] did from Gounod's great final trio." Whittaker remarks at the end of the first chapter of "Whittaker's Montreal" that

the magic of Robert Edmond Jones stayed with me.... I was to see more of the work of Robert Edmond Jones, and to be mightily influenced by him, along with the earlier Craig. In time I was to meet him, and learn more from him, as I was later to meet Craig. But that was much, much later. 50

Whittaker never pursued an academic education in theatre or drama. After finishing high school at Strathcona Academy, he took art courses at l'École des Beaux Arts in Montreal. He describes himself as "a somewhat threadbare art student" and he says, "I
virtually lived at the Coffee House when I was supposed to be working at the studio." He liked the Bohemian image the school allowed him to affect, however. "As a student in life class," he says, "I earned the sacred right to wear a beret — as genuine a Bohemian as ever came down from the north." Although Montreal was a bilingual city, Whittaker never learned to speak French. He says of his experience at l'Ecole des Beaux Arts:

Did I have language difficulties in a school where all the instructors were French? Not really. The master would wave me aside, sit down at my easel and demonstrate, with much panache, where I failed to do justice to the model.

While Whittaker was especially interested in Canadian talent from an early age, he notes in "Whittaker's Montreal" that "there was little Canadian theatre to influence me during this period." Stock companies, which he says "were essentially extensions — performers and plays — of New York theatre," and touring companies, were the staples of his theatrical diet. "The plays I was taken to see in Montreal," he remarks, "were the best of those that were toured, and the majority of them came from England."

Despite the appeal of these abundant European and American influences, though, and the fact that Whittaker says "there was little Canadian theatre to influence me during this period," he was fascinated by Montreal's theatrical history. "I love to discover...old glories of Montreal's theatre," he says, and he displays an impressive knowledge of that history in all his writings.

Whittaker remarks that during her career, Sarah Bernhardt was "the world's best-known and most-admired actress" and he is proud
of the fact that in 1880 she made a four-day visit to Montreal. After recording details of this visit, Whittaker says in "Whittaker's Montreal" that "with such histrionic inspiration Canadians could not help but aspire to act." Perhaps Whittaker was inspired to act by his studies of Bernhardt's illustrious career. While his personal acting experience was extremely modest and entirely amateur, it was important to the development of his understanding of the acting craft. In "Whittaker's Montreal", he refers to his attempt to imitate George Arliss in his front parlour and his performance in his Sunday School production of The Idol's Eye. He talks of how he played the lead in The Toff, "a little chiller by Lord Dunsany." When he says, "I was very good - by the standards of the Church of the Ascension (Anglican) on Park Avenue, Montreal," we see his attempts at acting gave him a personal feeling of accomplishment in this community and he valued that. Having paid so much attention to famous star performers and professional performances, it is probable that Whittaker's acting experience not only gave him more insight into the craft of acting but it inspired him to do even more work in the theatre.

Whittaker read Bernhardt's memoirs and his fascination with her led him to ask a writer friend, Janet McPhee, if she would write a play about Bernhardt's visit to Montreal. Whittaker explained to Rubin that "when I read the episode [in Bernhardt's memoirs] in which she had been mobbed in Montreal and audiences defied the Bishop of Montreal to attend her performances, I was
determined to get a play written about this." Whittaker directed McPhee's play, *Divinity in Montreal*, and it won the Barry Jackson Challenge Trophy Award for the best production of a Canadian play in the 1939 Dominion Drama Festival finals. This was Whittaker's first award in the Dominion Drama Festival for directing and Betty Taylor won the best actress award for her work in this production.

Although Whittaker lived in Outremont, "a part of the world largely occupied by Roman Catholics," he said that "for the most part, I wasn't aware of living in the world's second largest French-speaking city." It seemed unlikely, then, that he would find another church in his neighbourhood in which he could pursue his theatrical interests. The Church of the Ascension seemed to afford him no further opportunities for developing theatrical skills. Whittaker found opportunities elsewhere in the city, though, and in 1933, he received his first design credit for *The Royal Family of Broadway*, staged by the Westmount Dramatic Club.

In that same year, Whittaker started working with a group of people at the Unitarian Church of the Messiah on Sherbrooke Street in downtown Montreal. A couple of his schoolmates at Strathcona Academy, with whom he also played tennis, were members of this church. George Brewer, head of the Canadian College of Music, for whom the parishioners had purchased an expensive Casavant organ, presented performances of Hugo von Hofmannstal's *Jedermann* in an effort to help pay for the instrument. Brewer chose this particular work because he had previously seen a production of it and his daughter Marjorie had recently seen Max Reinhardt's famous
production of it done in the Domplatz at Salzburg. Whittaker said that "it was a decision of some daring and it was to affect me deeply." He submitted design sketches for the production and they were accepted. "Our lighting," he said, "was primitive but imaginative."

From making and colouring maquettes at home after seeing Martin-Harvey's Hamlet production at His Majesty's Theatre, to designing the 1933 production of Jedermann at Montreal's downtown Church of the Messiah, Whittaker had taken an important step forward in his career as a designer by the time he was twenty-three. Designing Jedermann took him out of church-basement amateurism onto the threshold of professional performance. The Everyman Players was formed at this church, subsequent productions were planned, and Whittaker designed energetically for them. Public interest was stimulated by "very flattering reviews by both of Montreal's leading critics, Thomas Archer and S. Morgan-Powell." Whittaker says of his affiliation with this church:

To remain as a guiding member of the Players I had been asked to join the Unitarian Church. I did so willingly, for a church that understood its link with the theatre was one with which I could easily identify. While Whittaker's allegiance to the theatre is admirable, nothing he had accomplished up to this point in his career could be regarded as a substitute for professional training.

Whittaker tells us in "Whittaker's Montreal" that he still has "some of those first Everyman designs which so altered the course of my life, and I am distressed that they now seem so paltry." He includes in "Whittaker's Montreal" an account by Charles
Rittenhouse of the Everyman Players:

Most popular was Everyman itself, which gave its name to the group and in which I played Good Fellowship, a role that I like to remember in connection with my relationship with Herb. The productions were most spectacular, with much pageantry. Undoubtedly the person most responsible for the great success of the Everyman Players was Herbert, whose costume designs became increasingly imaginative and spectacular. 71

"As a designer I was in charge of the whole look of a production," says Whittaker, and his involvement with the Everyman Players gave him invaluable experience in this area of theatrical craft. In 1934 Whittaker designed his first Shakespeare production, A Midsummer Night's Dream, directed by Rittenhouse at West Hill High School. It was also in 1934 that Whittaker designed The Man with a Load of Mischief by Ashley Dukes, staged by the Montreal Repertory Theatre in the ballroom of the Ritz-Carlton Hotel.

Involvement with the Montreal Repertory Theatre also provided Whittaker with the invaluable opportunity of observing the city's (and indeed some of the country's) best actors at work. Martha Allan founded the Montreal Repertory Theatre in the coach house of her family home in Montreal in 1930. Prior to that, she had studied at the Pasadena Community Playhouse which was considered "Southern California's most exciting playhouse." It was founded in 1918 and besides reviving classics it regularly offered new plays by unknown playwrights at its Laboratory Theatre and conducted a highly praised acting school. 74

Whittaker states that under Martha Allan's guidance, the Montreal Repertory Theatre "attracted the best actors in Montreal because Martha soon established it as the leading theatre in the city."
He lists a number of actors, both high calibre amateurs and ones with professional experience, who worked at the Montreal Repertory Theatre. "Had there existed an English-language professional theatre in Montreal," he says, "these people could have fairly laid claim to it. As it was, they were already learning to make money out of their talent through the only professional market at their disposal: radio broadcasting."

At the Montreal Repertory Theatre, Whittaker was able to study closely the mainstream acting style of the era:

Since Montreal had been, until the 1930's, a way station on the American Road and for British tours, the style of acting at MRT was something of a blend between two schools.... American and British styles were then not dissimilar, the English stage still maintaining its old influence on New York style.... With Martha drawing on her Pasadena training, they were responsible for the MRT's acting style which might well be characterized as 'mid-Atlantic'.

Whittaker learned more about acting on his frequent trips to New York City in the 1930s. (He used his employee's pass from Canadian Pacific Railways where he worked as a junior clerk.) It was in New York that he was able to see the work of some of the most outstanding professional designers, directors and actors of the day. In Montreal, though, there was nothing he could do with this increased knowledge of professional theatre except apply it to his work in amateur productions. He continued his involvement with local Montreal groups in 1935, designing The Spanish Miracle for the Everyman Players and Romeo and Juliet for West Hill High School.

In the course of his involvement with different theatre groups, Whittaker met Tom Archer of The Gazette. Archer, supportive
of Whittaker's work in the theatre, had Whittaker go with him to movie openings and in this way became indirectly responsible for Whittaker's future career involvement as a movie critic. More directly, though, Archer was responsible for Whittaker obtaining his first job at a newspaper:

Tom Archer suggested I apply for a job at The Gazette when that paper daringly launched a radio page once a week.... If The Gazette was to have a special page for radio listings every Friday somebody would have to assist Tom Archer. Somebody would have to collect the listings, prepare them for type, help edit and fill the theatre page, as well as extra material for the Saturday theatre pages. I went to be interviewed by Charles Peters, the grave but kindly representative of the publishing White family, who agreed to give me a trial. 78

Like the actors who worked at the Montreal Repertory Theatre, Whittaker's beachhead into professionalism in the arts was provided by the radio broadcasting market. From this beginning, Whittaker quickly moved up the ranks of The Gazette's arts reviewers. As he did this, he illustrated his personal desire for comprehensiveness, which was to become one of the distinguishing features of his journalistic career. He recalls:

Gradually I became attached to the M. and D. department (Music and Drama preceded Entertainment in newspaper designations) where I brought my energies to bear on the expansion of its coverage. I covered more minor theatre groups, determined that no theatrical achievement would go unheralded in The Gazette. 79

"I was also allowed to test my wings as a critic," says Whittaker. He reviewed the McGill Players' Club's production of The Shining Hour, an English domestic drama by Keith Winter. Excited by an account of Raymond Massey's and Gladys Cooper's Broadway appearance in the play, Whittaker was disappointed by the
student production he saw at Moyse Hall and criticized the production "firmly and scornfully." Adam Marshall, his editor at the paper, pointed out to the young critic that his review was misguided. From this experience, Whittaker learned a useful lesson in critical perspective:

Over the months and years, I come across this thwarted review, and re-read it. Each time I do so I am able to recognize it more sharply for what it really was: a document of youthful arrogance proclaiming the little I knew as evidence that others knew less. That humbling recognition was to guide my future career as a professional critic. 82

This experience, along with his own continual involvement in amateur theatre, gave Whittaker a sympathy towards the efforts of people working in the theatre in Canada that is evident in his criticism. This is one of the essential factors underlying his impressionistic approach.

After a trip to England with his mother in 1935, Whittaker, by this time devoted to a life in the theatre, had to make a decision about his future based on the situation in Canada. He describes it as a 'mid-Atlantic' compromise:

The fall of 1935 brought me back home to Montreal without a job, without money, but very high in hopes. I recognized by then that my life had to be closely linked with the theatre on a full-time basis. But the theatre that was developing in Canada was comfortably amateur still. Where was I to find a professional life in the theatre without leaving the country? It was a dilemma which was to plague Canadians for several more decades. My own solution today strikes me as something close to the absurd - I became director - designer - critic. 83

It was not until 1937 that Whittaker began writing movie reviews for The Montreal Gazette. He also covered ballet, amateur theatre and night club shows for that newspaper. In 1936 he began
an association with Montreal's YM-YWHA Players, one which he continued until 1948. In 1936 he designed *Once in a Lifetime* for them. It was also in 1936 that Whittaker became the resident designer of the younger drama group in the Church of the Messiah, the Sixteen-Thirty Club. (He held this position in the club until 1940.) In 1936, Whittaker and members of the Everyman Players collaborated with the Sixteen-Thirty Club and staged a one-act play, *Judge Lynch*, at Channing Hall behind the church. "The performance went well enough to be entered into the local competition of the three-year-old Dominion Drama Festival," says Whittaker, "and, to our glee, merited an invitation to Ottawa for the finals, along with the prestigious Montreal Repertory Theatre." At the finals at the Ottawa Little Theatre, adjudicator Harley Granville-Barker commended "both the acting and the lighting." In Whittaker's estimation, this was a "victory in the highest court of drama."

Whittaker continued his practical work in the theatre while developing his critical skills. The first production that he both directed and designed was the Sixteen-Thirty Club's 1938 production of *Festival in Time of Plague*. This production won the Western Quebec Drama Festival award. At the Dominion Drama Festival finals in Winnipeg, Marjorie Brewer won the award for best actress. The original productions had been in Channing Hall but after this success, the group graduated to a different venue. "Upon our return," says Whittaker, "we showed Montreal our prize Canadian play once again, this time in the more elegant church hall of the
Whittaker's next venture was the commissioning and staging of the Bernhardt play, *Divinity in Montreal*, for Dominion Drama Festival competition. "Of course, we didn't simply prepare annual entries for competitions," says Whittaker. "The Sixteen-Thirty Club was much more ambitious than that. We moved precipitously into full-length drama, staging it on the miniscule Channing Hall stage." The Channing Hall stage was not the only resource stretched to the limit by the ambitiousness of the Sixteen-Thirty Club. Whittaker was asked by *The Gazette*, where he was by this time a second-string critic, to review the Club's production of *The Seagull*, which he had chosen, designed and directed himself.

By the end of the third decade of his life, then, Whittaker had gained experience in the theatrical professions of designer, director and critic. His early achievements with the Sixteen-Thirty Club led to greater success in his work for the Montreal Repertory Theatre. By 1940, in addition to his work as a critic, he was also writing a weekly column for *The Gazette's* radio page. While he was now on his way to becoming "accredited drama critic for *The Montreal Gazette*," one must consider that it took him sixteen years - from the age of fourteen to the age of thirty - to get his feet wet in any professional work involving the theatre. Given that Whittaker had such personal and professional freedom to work in the theatre at the time, and that he had seen theatre in London and New York, his slowness to develop professionally indicates that he found the community/art theatre environment stimulated his
creativity, and that he derived a great deal of artistic and personal satisfaction and fulfillment from working in that environment.

Whittaker says of his early development as a professional critic:

"In the winters I was developing from the modest status of a greenhorn reviewer to that of established drama critic with all the responsibilities attendant on such a post in what I was sure was a developing theatrical culture. I was encouraged in this movement from creative to interpretive tasks by other kinds of satisfaction. I was covering Montreal theatre in a singularly fascinating period of its long history, and occasionally I covered Broadway theatre, both on the road and in New York, in an equally fascinating era. Those "interpretive tasks" became the foundation of Whittaker's future. In the late 1930s and early 1940s, though, before he left Montreal for Toronto, his continuing 'creative' efforts in the theatre helped shape his critical perspective and performance. The personal and professional freedom an individual such as Whittaker had to involve himself in so many areas of interest was an attractive aspect of that era. "In those early days," he says, "it was possible for an energetic person dedicated to the theatre to function simultaneously as designer, director, and even critic. That was long before the new journalism, the investigative kind spurred by The Washington Post, made us sensitive to conflict of interest charges."

It was a time in which Whittaker had carte blanche to do such things as join with a group of friends and convert the Lachine Boating Club into a summer playhouse. Inspired by photographs of American summer theatres in Stage Magazine, the founders of the
Lakeshore Summer Theatre (with Whittaker as "Scenic Designer" and board member), staged *Julius Caesar* in 1937, *Henry VIII* in 1938 and *Shakuntala* in 1939. "In retrospect," says Whittaker, "the two seasons of the Lakeshore Summer Theatre run together, but before our work was terminated, by the introduction of gas rationing, we came close to emulating that New England straw-hat establishment." This was the beginning of Whittaker's life-long interest in summer theatre, and throughout his career as a theatre critic he included the annual 'straw-hat' season in his beat.

Whittaker progressed from designer to director at the Lakeshore Summer Theatre and it was for this short-lived theatre that he, together with Janet McPhee, another of the members, wrote a play. Their "summer stock melodrama", *Jupiter in Retreat*, was unfinished by the time the theatre folded after its second season. In 1948, however, this play was performed by the Montreal Repertory Theatre. As with acting, Whittaker did not pursue playwriting in the future. From this experience, though, he gained insight into the playwriting craft. "It proved harder than we thought," he says of the writing of *Jupiter in Retreat*. This perhaps helped temper his critical approach to the countless aspiring young playwrights, especially Canadian, on whom he passed judgement during his career as a journalist.

Another summer theatre with which Whittaker became involved as a designer and director was the Brae Manor Playhouse, founded by Filmore and Marjorie Sadler in Knowlton, Quebec in 1940. He says that his
recollectons of Brae Manor are highly personal, and warmly affectionate. I used to take my summer holidays at Knowlton, enjoying the beautiful townships countryside between the heavy schedule of weekly play production. I was a favoured guest, contributing my services in return for board, lodging and friendship. The Brae Manor theatrical fare rose in quality from the usual straw-hat attractions to works of considerable value. I helped that trend, I suppose.

Even after moving to Toronto in 1949, Whittaker returned to Brae Manor in the summers to work with his friends and acquaintances and contribute to the productions, reports of which he sent to The Globe and Mail. The Brae Manor Playhouse closed in the early 1950s after Filmore Sadler's death. "Brae Manor," says Whittaker, "was perhaps the most ideal theatre I was ever to encounter, free from doubt, antagonism, restrictive rules about rehearsal times and, in its simplicity, free from financial pressures."

In 1942, Whittaker began "reviewing professional theatre and important little theatre productions." Because he and the Montreal arts community in general perceived no conflict of interest between critic and practitioner, Whittaker was able to continue designing and directing productions long after he began to work professionally as a critic. He continued to work with local theatre groups even during the war years. In 1942 he designed the Negro Theatre Guild's production of The Green Pastures by Marc Connelly. In March of that year it was staged at Victoria Hall in Westmount and in May it was produced at His Majesty's Theatre.

In 1943 he designed Lillian Hellman's Watch on...
the Rhine for the Montreal Repertory Theatre, the first production at its renovated Guy Street playhouse. He also did design work for the Montreal Open Air Theatre. When asked by Rubin how that theatre differed from the Montreal Repertory Theatre, Whittaker explained that it "was a summer operation and I suppose involved many of the same people. They would do one big production... on top of the mountain, out of doors. I participated as designer on one occasion, I think." From an experience such as this, Whittaker undoubtedly learned how major productions could be staged effectively in the summer in Canada without the need of a permanent building. It probably contributed to his confidence when he promoted the first Stratford Festival. When Rubin asked Whittaker about the early days of the Stratford Festival, he emphasized that it was a summer theatre and that through those early days until it finally opened in the tent I called it 'the most exciting night in the history of the Canadian theatre' and that has been much quoted. It still for me was the most exciting night -- when the tent was up, despite all the problems that had come up. It was crisis after crisis. The builder was putting it up without being paid because he believed in it and Guthrie was spurring people on. 99 In 1945, Whittaker and Charles Rittenhouse founded the Shakespeare Society of Montreal. Whittaker designed its first production in 1945, Much Ado About Nothing, which was staged at Moyse Hall at McGill University. In April, 1946, Whittaker directed The Old Ladies by Rodney Ackland, his first production for the Montreal Repertory Theatre. He also designed King Lear for the Shakespeare Society in 1946 and designed and directed Shaw's Candida for the Brae Manor Players (as their first guest director).
In 1949 Whittaker was appointed a Governor of the Dominion Drama Festival. He designed and directed two productions for that year's regional competition: The Linden Tree by J.B. Priestley for the Trinity Players, a little theatre group in Montreal, and The Dybbuk by S. Ansky for the YM-YWHA Players. It was just after the 1949 Dominion Drama Festival that Whittaker left The Gazette to begin his job as theatre and movie critic for The Globe and Mail.

Whittaker considered himself a pioneer in the Montreal theatre and he was in the sense that he established a new level of design in the amateur theatre of that city. He believed that the influence of Craig and Jones was always evident in his work. Craig's theory of "an artist of the Theatre" and Jones' powerful, "highly poetic designs" were probably what influenced him most. His studies at l'École des Beaux Arts and his work in Montreal amateur and little theatres allowed him to develop as a theatre craftsman and his designs were imaginative and non-representational. If Whittaker had at one time considered becoming a professional designer, though, a comment by Rittenhouse, which he includes in "Whittaker's Montreal", seems to indicate his acceptance of his limitations in this area:

His lack of technical training would keep him from becoming a professional designer for, say, the New York stage. He couldn't pass the necessary apprenticeship in mechanical drawing.

Whittaker's work as a director also afforded him experience invaluable to his career. From his first effort with the Sixteen-Thirty Club with Festival in Time of Plague, to Ah Wilderness! with
the Montreal Repertory Theatre in 1948, Whittaker had experience directing a variety of plays from different periods of theatrical history, and done in a variety of styles, by the time he joined *The Globe and Mail* in 1949. From his directing experiences, Whittaker learned the place and function of the director in the modern theatre: something that he thought S. Morgan-Powell would not acknowledge. In "Whittaker's Montreal", he says:

S. Morgan-Powell refused to move with the times. He refused to recognize the place of the director in the theatre preferring to credit the actor-manager. He wrote fluently and richly of the theatre of the day as if it was unchanged since the days of Bernhardt and Henry Irving. 103

In 1946, Whittaker both directed and designed the Montreal Repertory Theatre's production of *I Remember Mama*. He drew certain conclusions from his experience staging this production which helped him differentiate between Canadian actors' approach to their craft and the approach of English and American actors:

I remember attempting to advance my directorial methods by giving the solid cast of MRT players the right to move and react as they felt their character dictated; I would incorporate those movements into my stage action and business. Not a soul contributed his own movements which confirmed my growing conviction that Canadian actors are a particularly docile lot giving their directors greater control than either American or British directors enjoyed. It would also suggest that Method acting had not yet reached the Montreal Repertory Theatre by the late forties. 104

Whittaker found out early that Canadians not only acted differently from non-Canadians but also behaved differently in all departments of theatre. As a result of studying Quebec's French-language theatre, he decided that the difference was primarily one of a lingering colonialism in Canada. He believed that, like
English-language theatrical culture in Montreal, its French-language counterpart also "had its years of profound colonialism" and that "it took time for native and local names to achieve any kind of recognition and respect."

Of French-speaking talents, Gratien Gélinas was the one who became most famous during Whittaker's years in Montreal. As 'Fridolin', Gélinas became an award-winning radio personality, known in both Canada and the United States. It was through the medium of radio that Gélinas gained his widest popularity and Whittaker developed a lasting respect for him when he saw his Fridolin variety show on stage. This knowledge of the work of Gélinas later became helpful to Whittaker when Tit-Coq made its way to Toronto's Royal Alexandra Theatre. It helped him come to terms with both the content of the play and Gélinas' acting style, and determine what was uniquely Canadian about both. He promoted Tit-Coq through its two runs in Toronto (one in preparation for New York, another after its failure there) and its brief appearance on Broadway.

Whittaker also detected a difference between British and American acting styles in Père Émile Legault's Les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent. "Their playing made a sharp contrast to theatrical British restraint and the American emphasis on psychology seen in Montreal's English-language theatre," he says in "Whittaker's Montreal." In the future, especially in his involvement with the National Theatre School, Whittaker hoped such differences would become part of "an acting style identifiably Canadian." As long
as there were strong cultural distinctions between English-language and French-language theatre, however, such a development would be extremely difficult, if not impossible. Differences between the two cultures were as apparent in the Dominion Drama Festival as anywhere else. Historically, the management of the annual festival had been dominated by Anglophones. Whittaker says of this situation:

Naturally, the dissatisfaction felt by the French Canadians over the management of the DDF by the English Canadians was centred in Montreal. The Montreal French felt that there was no solution other than the division of the DDF into two separate operations, one French, one English.

When the annual festival was regenerated in 1947, for the first time, a Canadian adjudicator, Emrys Jones, was selected. This helped to reconcile the French and English camps. Whittaker, both as participant in the festival and as critic of its plays, was party to all of these developments and believed they were important in the evolution of a national theatre and drama.

In 1947, there was also a favourable development in Whittaker's career as a critic:

By 1947 I was reviewing major dramatic attractions. The Montreal Herald...had offered me the post of theatre and film critic. When I told this to Charlie Peters, The Gazette's editor-in-chief who had hired me, he came up with a counter-offer of the same post on The Gazette.... I could [now] attend opening nights at His Majesty's Theatre and make the dash to St. Antoine Street to rush my reaction into print. It had been a long apprenticeship. I had earned the advantage which I held for many years afterwards of being the first critical notice available on the street.

Although Whittaker's career as a critic seemed to be progressing well, Montreal was quickly diminishing in its ability to support it. The war had taken its toll on the city's theatres. The
tradition of the English theatrical tours had been broken and almost ceased altogether after 1945. "I knew that Montreal was not getting its full share of the best theatre on the continent," says Whittaker. "Toronto put us in the shade." Bookings of all kinds became so rare in Montreal that the theatre went into serious decline. Whittaker was able "to keep in touch with the larger stage of the day," by visiting New York, but without the base of theatrical material in his home city, he could not continue to grow as a critic. Whittaker says that nonetheless, in the early post-war period,

I had no intention of leaving Montreal because I was very happy in Montreal, very busy. Bob Farquharson, The Globe's managing editor, flew down and persuaded me. When I talked to a few friends, they said, 'you have no choice, you'll have to go'. The reason being that there was a greater activity because of the dominance of English theatre here in Toronto than there was in Montreal at that time. 112

When Rubin asked Whittaker to compare Montreal and Toronto as cities at that time, Whittaker replied that

there was no comparison then. Montreal was a metropolis. It had a great deal of theatrical life. The French and the English there by then were exchanging and some people were conscious of being in a two-language, two-culture city. That's how Pierre Dejeuner came to direct our production [of] King Lear and that's how I came to direct his production of Shaw's Arms and the Man. It was a very lively and exciting town. Of course, it is a beautiful town, and it was particularly good at that time to live in. A great deal of contrast, historical background, all the things that excited me at the time were there. 113

Whittaker was a proud citizen of that city and exuded a self-confidence that reflected its character. In 1993, Jennifer Harvie and Richard Paul Knowles produced a paper on Whittaker entitled "Herbert Whittaker, Reporting From the Front: Montreal Gazette
(1937-1949) and the *Globe and Mail* (1949-1975)*. One of the central problems with this paper is that Harvie and Knowles do not recognize the significance of Whittaker's Montreal background. In this paper, they characterize Whittaker essentially as a "war reporter", using the argument that Canada in the second World War was seen to be fighting and proving itself for the first time as an independent nation, albeit in a European war, and that struggle seems to have shaped Whittaker's nationalism -- perhaps the most prominent characteristic of his criticism -- throughout his career. 114 The first problem with this perspective on Whittaker is that it overlooks the effect that the first World War had on shaping nationalist sentiment in him. As has been mentioned, he spent the years of the first World War in England. In the first chapter of "Whittaker's Montreal", he tells us:

> Taken to London as a child to be exhibited to family, I was marooned there with my mother, Eleanor Trappitt Whittaker, and my older brother, George, by the outbreak of World War I. 115

Whittaker's use of the word 'marooned' indicates that this was not a desirable predicament for him. He discusses his theatre-going experiences ("My first pantomime was something to remember!") in such a way as to suggest that the experience of being stranded in London during the war was best forgotten but the opportunity he had to go to theatres and cinemas was a marvellous consolation. Indeed, he turned a negative experience into a positive one and learned all he could about the theatre and films during his time there. This indicates that as far as the shaping of his nationalism is concerned, his first impulse was to separate the war experience from the theatrical. At the same time, he learned that going to
the theatre and cinema can be an exciting aspect of living in a major city. We see the tendency in Whittaker to separate the war experience from that of going to the theatre or cinema again after the second World War when he said disapprovingly in his 1949 Globe and Mail review of the film Piccadilly Incident that "it still looks a little like warmed-over wartime fare."

Harvie and Knowles argue that to a considerable extent, Whittaker's sensibilities would seem to have been shaped during the war years, and it is not entirely frivolous to see him as a kind of war reporter: his war-time reviews do not seem out of place in the Gazette of the time, rubbing shoulders with news flashes from the front and war-time propaganda for the cause of the free world.

Focusing on Whittaker's development as a critic during the war years causes Harvie and Knowles to overlook the significance of his development during the time period of almost four decades that he spent in Montreal, especially in terms of continuity. It is important to consider this development in relation to Whittaker's nationalism in a couple of ways. First, in Whittaker's youth, Montreal was an important place on the map of the British imperial world, a major port of the empire, with four shipping lines plying constantly down the St. Lawrence to Europe. In general, Montreal did not feel a need to prove its equality to other places. It was not as nationalistic as Toronto, Winnipeg, and points west, largely because it did not ask "Where is here?" As a Montrealer, Whittaker did not feel the need to overcome provincialism or a colonial cringe. Nationalism, in the way Harvie and Knowles employ the term as meaning championing values and ideologies that if not intrinsically, then systemically, exclude elements of colonialism,
was next to irrelevant to him at that time in that city. Therefore, when Harvie and Knowles discuss Whittaker's criticism in the post-World War II period and argue that

the nationalism so central to his sensibilities as a critic can be seen to mask, behind the apparent objectivity of his tone, an imperialism perhaps all the more effective -- some would say pernicious -- because it is both unconscious and benign in intent, 119

they are misapplying the concepts of 'nationalism' and 'imperialism' to Whittaker and wrongly accusing him of 'intent'. What they identify as 'imperialism' in his writing is actually his attempt to invest Canada with some of the theatrical knowledge he acquired (and the excitement he felt about that knowledge) as a citizen of Montreal. He was entirely conscious that he was doing that and he hoped it would be a productive way of helping "the theatre in Canada" develop into "the Canadian theatre". He attempted to do this through his work as a critic, while functioning in one half of his "double life".

Harvie and Knowles also fail to recognize the significance of Whittaker's work as a director-designer in Montreal, which constituted the other half of his "double life". This is caused by the fact that they attempt to recognize a complex ideology in his writings. Whittaker's aforementioned statement that a country was not a country without a theatre could be seen as his ideology and it could also be the defining statement of his nationalism. However, Harvie and Knowles see this as simply "an aesthetic agenda" masking "a liberal humanist" ideology which they
also see as ultimately being 'imperialistic':

The kind of theatre that such a criticism and such an ideology finds to be "obviously" "good," not surprisingly, tends to function as what Marcuse calls "affirmative culture," reinforcing dominant forms and values, in this case, white, western, logocentric, imperialist, and patriarchal. 122

Harvie and Knowles again misinterpret Whittaker because they argue from a perspective that is largely misapplied to him and that is that all aesthetic discussion is really about ideology or content. Whittaker's studies at l'École des Beaux Arts and his involvement in community and Little theatres in Montreal amounted to a long, consistent apprenticeship in theatrical craft. As a critic, then, the perspective he took to his work was that of an artist, an expert on form. As he worked in art theatres, he was interested in, and used to working with, new forms of theatrical expression.

Harvie and Knowles argue from the perspective of literary theorists and therefore do not discuss craft in relation to Whittaker because craft has almost no intellectual content. It is the part of art that artists can only acquire by observing and working under more experienced artists, and then doing it themselves, over and over until they become expert. For example, an actor cannot be told how to move his body gracefully or how to produce his voice resonantly. These are things the actor must learn by imitation and practice. As literary theorists, Harvie and Knowles have attempted to democratize the critical process by eliminating craft from their discourse and maintaining that what is most important in art is ideology. This critical methodology simply does not work for an analysis of Whittaker.
As a critic, Whittaker understood the primacy of craft and how it is acquired. Because of this, he necessarily had to believe in artistic tradition. Traditionally, craft reaches its greatest heights in civilizations where young craftsmen apprentice themselves to older ones who were once apprentices themselves. Craft is a body of lived experience in which the trials and errors of many lifetimes are compressed into unwritten habits of work, so that each craftsman does not have to make all the possible mistakes his craft affords in his own lifetime before nearing mastery of his work. It cannot be launched in a new society by giving lectures or writing books about it. It can only be transmitted by a long continuity of practice. The opportunity Whittaker had to develop his skills as a theatrical craftsman was a major source of excitement and fulfillment for him when he lived in Montreal.

Harvie and Knowles insist that that Whittaker's criticism reveals an underlying ideology and while they say that "the ideology masked by Whittaker's aesthetic agenda of producing a Canadian national theatre in the tradition of the best of the so-called civilized world is a liberal humanist one," what they are really suggesting is that his work expresses a conservative ideology that was biased towards 'high', 'affirmative' culture. Again, they say that this was not conscious on his part. They argue that "Whittaker's bias was certainly not intentional, nor was he alone in his preference for plays that seemed 'naturally' superior because of their traditional strengths and values." Whittaker's bias was entirely intentional because he cared a great deal about
craft and took it seriously and because of that he cared about traditions and Canada's theatrical past. This also accounts for his concentration on the craftsmanship of the new Canadian plays he reviewed, a characteristic of his criticism which was so much on the surface when he first began writing for The Globe and Mail. Harvie and Knowles misrepresent Whittaker because they omit craft from their discourse.

A literary theorist could contend that craft creates a hierarchy or aristocracy within art, which should be a republic of free minds. An artist could argue, however, that art is craft and without craft, art does not exist, and that anyone who says that ideology — moral content — is more important than excellence in craft is simply saying that he or she is interested primarily in morality and politics. In "The Nature of Gothic" chapter of The Stones of Venice, John Ruskin did a detailed analysis of European Gothic architecture, particularly northern Gothic, and in the course of this study addressed the problem of ideology versus craft in art. He said that "men are universally divided, as respect their artistic qualifications, into three great classes: a right, a left, and a centre. On the right side are the men of facts, on the left the men of design, in the centre the men of both." As Ruskin presented these as universal divisions, Whittaker, the designer, clearly fell into the second category.

In post-World War II Toronto, it was Nathan Cohen who could be placed in the first category. Unlike Whittaker, Cohen had a university education. He attended Mount Allison University from
1939-42, "where he acted and directed with the Mount Allison Players and wrote on politics, theatre and the arts for the student newspaper, Argosy Weekly." He then studied law in Toronto and moved there permanently after the war. Cohen's primary concern in his reviews was with ideology - the ideas in plays. This is confirmed by Allan Gould's study of his life and work in his 1977 dissertation on Cohen, "A Critical Assessment of the Theatre Criticism of Nathan Cohen with a Bibliography and Selected Anthology." Cohen's critical perspective was fundamentally different from Whittaker's in that he formulated a personal "credo which insisted on...the supremacy of text over theatricality." This was facilitated by what Gould describes as "an almost uncanny ability" on Cohen's part "to separate a production from its text, and so to discover, and relate to his listeners or readers, the script's true intention." Gould argues that

when Nathan Cohen began to write theatre criticism in 1946, he was faced with a double task: not only to establish professional standards for an indigenous theatre which only periodically had risen above amateurism, but to re-educate the theatre-going public to see drama in performance as an art form worthy of serious criticism.

In that context, Gould says that "Cohen saw his duty as drama critic as twofold: to teach and to criticize that which fell below his standards." Gould presents Cohen as more of an 'academic' critic than his counterparts but at an early point in the dissertation he addresses a problem that arises from Cohen's 'credo':

Unlike most daily newspaper critics, Cohen often displayed the scholarly qualities one normally associates with the 'drama' rather than the 'theatre' critic. True, Cohen
was primarily a reviewer of plays in performance. However, he laid equal emphasis on textual evaluation. 131

This problem of primarily reviewing plays in production but insisting on the supremacy of text over theatricality became further complicated by Cohen's belief that "every staged play should be as well presented as the talents involved will permit," and his refusal "to judge shows produced by Canadians 'more sympathetically, more leniently' than productions from other countries." Gould emphasizes that throughout his career, "Cohen remained faithful to his credo that a critic should not fraternize with theatre people, and thus become over-sympathetic with the problems of producing, directing, performing or writing for the stage." This was another way in which Cohen was fundamentally different from Whittaker.

Cohen's approach led to "a pattern" in his criticism which Gould describes as follows:

Aside from the Manitoba Theatre Centre and the Neptune Theatre, all those companies that first excited Cohen with their possibilities for creating a vibrant Canadian theatre eventually disappointed him by their failure to hold firm to their initial policies. 136

Given his outlook, Cohen's disappointment with theatre companies was understandable. They consistently fell below his high standards. Gould also points out that "as Cohen was generally unimpressed by Canada's theatres, so he was by his country's playwrights." Yet, as Gould says,

Cohen insisted that 'plays by Canadians, good, bad, indifferent, need to be staged. Without this practical experience, our playwrights are unable to learn, to develop their craft, to make progress, and without our playwrights there cannot be, and there won't be, any worthwhile Canadian
Gould explains this paradoxical situation by saying that Cohen "was guilty of sloppy rhetoric in his listing of adjectives. Cohen the critic, as opposed to the promoter, would not tolerate 'bad' or 'indifferent' plays."

Gould's analysis brings to the surface some defining distinctions between Cohen and Whittaker. This last observation by Gould shows that while Cohen could not be a relentless promoter of Canadian plays, Whittaker could. While Cohen was too outspoken and opinionated to allow this, Whittaker's impressionistic style enabled him to do this. Gould admits that Cohen "practiced primarily 'destructive' as opposed to 'constructive' criticism. Generally, the opposite could be said of Whittaker. To use Ruskin's terms again, Cohen clearly emphasized 'facts' in his criticism but could have benefitted from more 'design'. By contrast, Whittaker emphasized 'design' but could have benefitted from more 'facts'.

In light of Ruskin's observations, however, the critical approaches of both Cohen and Whittaker were essentially viable, not only because each paid enough attention to both ideas and craft to make them so, but because, as Ruskin points out, not all artists are of "the central class." Ruskin analyzes two examples of vine work on European buildings and says that one "is a simple piece of fact work, healthy and good as such, and useful to any one who wanted to know plain truths about tendrils of vines, but there is no attempt at design in it." He describes another piece of vine work as "design, unregardful of facts." A third, he says, "is
central work; fact and design together." He concludes that the work is, in all three cases, perfectly healthy. Fig. 1 is not bad work because it has not design, nor Fig. 2 bad work because it has not facts. The object of the one is to give pleasure through truth, and of the other to give pleasure through composition. And both are right. 145

Because Cohen was so much the critic of ideas and so outspoken and highly opinionated, his presence in Toronto for so many of the years of Whittaker's career may well have caused Whittaker to write much more from a visual perspective and the point of view of a craftsman than he might otherwise have done. The fact that Cohen was highly critical of theatre workers and theatre companies was likely responsible for Whittaker being non-committal, especially about Canadian work, on so many occasions. Whittaker did these things not only to distinguish himself from Cohen but also to present another point of view, and probably because on many occasions he simply could not see the 'factual' side of the artistic situation as clearly as a critic like Cohen could.

While Whittaker was not a schooled intellectual or an academic critic, and may not have compared to Cohen as a thinker or as a reader, his long-time friendship with Charles Rittenhouse made him more serious about theatre than he would have been otherwise. 146 Whittaker and Rittenhouse were very close. Rittenhouse was probably the best theatrical mind in Montreal of his time. He was certainly the best-educated and most thoughtful of the people with whom Whittaker worked in Montreal theatre. Whittaker first worked with him at the Church of the Messiah and became director of the Sixteen-Thirty Club after he went to Yale to attend graduate
school. Whittaker also worked with him at the Montreal Repertory Theatre. When Rittenhouse returned to Montreal, he continued his involvement in "Montreal's lively Little Theatre movement." In addition to this, "he had a long career in Montreal as a teacher and as an educational administrator for the Protestant School Board of Greater Montreal." In that position, Rittenhouse initiated and organized a broad program of theatrical productions in both the primary and secondary school systems of Montreal. By encouraging talented teachers and by hiring professionals and aspirants, he co-ordinated a comprehensive system of high-quality classical and contemporary theatrical productions in Montreal's school system. 149

In addition to co-founding the Shakespeare Society of Montreal with Rittenhouse, a group that "brought together much of Montreal's theatrical talent," Whittaker was one of the professionals Rittenhouse hired to work on the productions in Montreal's school system. These experiences undoubtedly showed Whittaker his strengths and weaknesses as a practitioner in that he had education in the fine arts which Rittenhouse did not have but at the same time he lacked the formal academic training Rittenhouse received at Yale. At the same time, however, working on these productions afforded Whittaker an opportunity to spend a great deal of time working as a craftsman along with educators and academics in a wide middle ground between professionalism and amateurism. Because of his association with Rittenhouse, Whittaker was able to work closely on many occasions with people who were both "men of facts" and "men of design", to use Ruskin's terms. Whittaker's association with Rittenhouse, then, made him much more of a member
of the group of "men of both" than he would otherwise have been and this helped him in his work as a critic.

Rittenhouse served as an important mentor for Whittaker in Montreal and can be seen as a Montreal counterpart to Toronto's Herman Voaden in that Voaden also studied at Yale and did pioneering production work in the nineteen thirties in city schools and community theatres in Canada. Where Rittenhouse played "a major role in the encouragement and development of English-language theatre in Montreal," Voaden did much the same thing in Toronto, particularly by creating "Symphonic Expressionism" and experimenting with it as a form of theatrical expression. Voaden was influenced by Craig, as was Whittaker, and that influence is seen in the interest both showed in experimentation in their practical work in the theatre.

From Rittenhouse, Whittaker also learned a great deal about the importance and function of the director in the modern theatre, something that, as has been mentioned, his other mentor in Montreal, S. Morgan-Powell, would not acknowledge. ("I don't think Morgan to the end of his days ever recognized the existence of a director. He liked to presume that the leading actor, in the old tradition, had done all of that.") Despite his obstinacy about directors, Whittaker did learn some other things from him. Samuel Morgan-Powell was born in London, England in 1867. He joined The Montreal Star in 1907 and was the drama and literary critic for that paper for thirty-five years until he became senior editor during the second world war. He retired from that position in 1953.
It was Morgan-Powell who, as an editor, taught Whittaker important newspaper values. He taught him about the North American tradition of audiences wanting to see stars in their theatres, and therefore that readers were interested in information about stars rather than technical information about the theatre. Whittaker himself belonged to this tradition and he merged his own love of stars with his journalism. He encouraged his readers to see Canada's colonial theatre heritage, Canadian talent, and new developments in the theatre in Canada in an international context. Whittaker's *Theatricals*, published by Whittaker in 1993, is a continuation of a critical method he abandoned during his career at *The Globe and Mail*. He says in his introduction to this book:

> When I was first appointed drama critic for *The Globe and Mail*, I wanted to demonstrate that Canadian talent was equal to any in the outside world. I wrote articles about Canadian successes abroad and balanced these with dramatic incidents in our own theatre... Over the years, I collected stories of such involvements. Some I used in my column 'Showbusiness', until I perceived that it could better serve a growing theatre if I just recorded the activities of our artists at home. But I always regretted cutting off that flow of what my friends call, quite accurately, name-dropping. 155

In addition to the appeal of name-dropping, Whittaker's attempts to balance successes abroad with incidents in the theatre at home showed a desire on his part to judge developments in the Canadian theatre according to standards that were internationally based. It also showed that he wanted Canada to develop a theatre that was as good as any in the world, that would provide the conditions for actors of Canadian birth to develop and become stars of international stature at home.
Morgan-Powell "supported the development of a Canadian theatre, particularly through his encouragement of Little Theatre groups." He was also an influence on Whittaker in this respect in that he "worked closely with Martha Allan in the establishment of the Montreal Repertory Theatre." In addition, he "supported the fledgling Dominion Drama Festival," an institution which had a profound effect on Whittaker's career. It was Morgan-Powell who introduced Whittaker to the work of Craig and this was probably the most important thing he did for Whittaker as a mentor. In Whittaker's Theatricals, Whittaker tells how Morgan-Powell set him "on a path of inspiration" by making a connection between Craig and the "soaring curtains" and "great cyclorama" in the Martin-Harvey production of Hamlet Whittaker had seen as a child. Whittaker says that "thereafter I read all I could about this truly legendary artist" and "yearned to emulate him" in his early design work. Whittaker says that Morgan-Powell wrote until he reached his nineties. He'd had a career abroad and in Canada as a defender of the stage of Henry Irving, but gave the nod to indigenous theatre when it was encouraged by the Earl of Bessborough, Britain's Sir Barry Jackson and Canada's first major classic actress, Margaret Anglin. As a mentor, Rittenhouse gave Whittaker professional design work and helped him learn more about the differences between professionalism and amateurism, and between intellectuals and craftsmen in the theatre. He also gave him opportunities to explore through production an important middle ground in both cases. Morgan-Powell as a mentor inspired Whittaker to seek both a theatre in Canada that had high international standards and a theatre that
allowed artists to practice art for art's sake in exploration of innovation and new forms of theatrical expression.

Ruskin provides clarification in the discussion of art's standards and innovations. "The Nature of Gothic" chapter in The Stones of Venice is essentially an argument for craft as the most democratic face of art. Ruskin argues for a balance between elements and describes Gothic architecture as follows:

Gothic architecture has external forms and internal elements. Its elements are certain mental tendencies of the builders, legibly expressed in it; as fancifulness, love of variety, love of richness, and such others. Its external forms are pointed arches, vaulted roofs, etc. And unless both the elements and the forms are there, we have no right to call the style Gothic. It is not enough that it has the Form, if it have not also the power and life. It is not enough that it has the Power, if it have not the form. 162

Ruskin showed how the Gothic builders "were of that central class" 163 of artists, those "possessing the powers of both" the men of facts and the men of design. He argued further that the part of the work which was more especially their own was the truthfulness. Their power of artistic invention or arrangement was not greater than that of the Romanesque and Byzantine workmen...but to the ornamental feeling and rich fancy of the Byzantine, the Gothic builder added a love of fact which is never found in the South.... Nor is it only in external and visible subject that the Gothic workman wrought for truth: he is as firm in his rendering of imaginative as of actual truth; that is to say, when an idea would have been by a Roman, or Byzantine, symbolically represented, the Gothic mind realizes it to the utmost. 164

This latter part of the description of the qualities of the Gothic workman applies to Whittaker. The ability to know how and when an idea by a new Canadian playwright was fully realized was one of his greatest strengths as a critic. He had this ability because of his artistic imagination, his skill as a director and
designer, and his overall understanding of theatrical craft. This enabled him to come to terms with new Canadian plays and do critical justice to them throughout his career at The Globe and Mail.

The penultimate chapter of "Whittaker's Montreal" is entitled "On the Cosmopolitan Stage". In this chapter, he talks about some of his most memorable trips to New York. In 1938, for example, he saw the first production of Thornton Wilder's Our Town. The fact that Our Town had no set and was played on a stage bare to the back wall made a lasting impact on Whittaker:

The most academic of dramatists, Wilder also incorporated into his play influences from Noh drama, a factor I couldn't yet recognize. But the bare back wall of the Morosco Theatre, West of Broadway on 45th Street, burst on us all with the greatest impact. 165

The fact that he admitted he could not yet recognize the Noh drama influences indicates that later he became aware of his stage of development as a designer but saw his creative work as a continuing process of growth and development.

On this same trip, he saw a production of Hamlet starring Maurice Evans, the musical comedy Knickerbocker Holiday, starring Walter Huston, Abe Lincoln in Illinois, starring the Canadian actor Raymond Massey, a number of other musicals, and Danton's Death, directed by Orson Welles. This type of energetic exploration of the theatre scene was typical of Whittaker's New York 'holidays' and he gives anecdotal accounts of what went on inside the theatres. The experience he gained of the New York theatre enabled him to fill in for Walter Kerr at The New York Herald-Tribune when Kerr
took a sabbatical from his post as theatre critic in 1958.

In "Whittaker's Montreal", Whittaker's account of his first visit to Toronto is presented in the same manner as his above-mentioned trip to New York, as a series of memories of what went on both inside and outside the theatre:

I wasn't able to go to New York again for four seasons but I did see Katharine Cornell's memorable revival of Chekhov's The Three Sisters when it toured and reached Toronto in 1942. The cast included Judith Anderson, Ruth Gordon, Dennis King, Edmund Gwenn and Alexander Knox. I took a train to Kingston, where Grant Macdonald lives, and he then drove us to Toronto where we put up at the Windsor Arms and rushed directly to the Royal Alexandra, met its manager, Ernest Rawley, and saw The Three Sisters. I witnessed most of three performances of Guthrie McClintic's high-gloss production, and was properly thrilled. I interviewed, for The Gazette, Miss Cornell, Miss Anderson and Miss Gordon.... Grant sketched them while I talked to them. It was my first trip to Toronto where apart from the Royal Alexandra everything seemed to be closed. 166

Whittaker's reporting method is very much on the surface in this passage. He communicates the atmosphere of expectation of the production as conveyed by the names of an all-star cast. This is made all the more exciting by the fact that it was a 'revival' of a great play. He describes the adventure of getting to the theatre itself and gives the names of those both famous and not-so-famous encountered along the way. He gives an impression of the production, often visually oriented and emotionally charged, of backstage business, usually interviews, and includes a memory of what he did after he left the theatre. The reporting method used by Whittaker in his account of his first visit to Toronto in 1942 implies a perspective on the theatre, one that was conditioned by personal involvement, that formed the core of his theatrical
journalism and, to a large degree, shaped his dramatic criticism. It was essentially with this perspective of an intimate knowledge of theatrical craft and culture that he commenced work at The Globe and Mail in 1949.

Because of the ambience of the city and the work he was able to do there, Whittaker felt an exuberance about his life in Montreal that he initially found difficult to rediscover in Toronto. We see this exuberance at its height in a passage in "Whittaker's Montreal":

After two near-misses in the Western Quebec Regional Drama Festival, at the Sun Life Auditorium I was soon busy directing and designing a major Montreal Repertory Theatre production of Tennessee Williams' The Glass Menagerie. I recall walking past the Sun Life wedding cake building on Dominion Square one night in a state of exaltation, on my way home from my work at The Gazette, past the proud, old, seedy Windsor Hotel, St. George's Anglican buttresses, the formidable fortress of the Canadian Pacific's Windsor Station, the Archbishop's Palace behind St. James Basilica. 'This town,' I boasted, 'belongs to me.' 167

Toronto had just as much of its colonial heritage on the surface when Whittaker arrived there in 1949. Where Montreal was the second largest French-speaking city in the world next to Paris, Toronto was the second largest Orange city in the world next to Belfast. Bryden describes Whittaker as moving "from his beloved Montreal to the dourly complacent Calvinist city which Toronto then was, its favorite theatrical forms the ice-show, oratorio and Orange Day parade." Whittaker described to Rubin what it was like for him in Toronto at that time:

I didn't know Toronto. It took me a long time to realize that Toronto had its own background because it concealed it. It was a very closed town, when I first came here. My friends would always say, even strangers would say: 'How do you like Toronto
after Montreal?' I would tactfully hesitate and then they would come up and say, 'It's all right, you can tell me, I'm a Montrealer.' The inference, of course, was that I had come down a step or two. 169

Bryden points out that "Toronto in the 1940s lacked the first condition of a bohemia - its Presbyterian blue laws forbade the existence of café-bars - and defined 'entertainment', usually, as having school friends home for dinner." Clearly, Whittaker's move from Montreal to Toronto was a difficult adjustment for him to make in this city "notorious then for its cliquish and introverted social life." Although Whittaker was accepted by Toronto's theatre community and able to continue his work as a director and designer, in 1949 he was not the city's ideal theatre critic. As Bryden points out:

In the middle of the twentieth century, there were few places in the world where theatre-going was regarded as a pursuit for intellectuals, and Toronto was not one of them. This was part of a larger condescension toward the visual and performing arts.... By the lights of the time, Toronto was a good intellectual city. Its second-hand bookstores testified to at least a century of plentiful, serious reading. That its architecture was heavy and imitative, its visual taste undeveloped, its restaurants merely serviceable, was not in those days seen as relevant. Such matters - and theatre among them - were not thought of as germane to the life of plain living and high thinking. 172

Bryden explains that

this meant that one of two courses was expected of a theatre critic. Either he should judge drama lightly, as a simple diversion for passing time without effort, or he should take it seriously, which meant treating it as a sub-division of literature, which was itself a sub-division of morality and politics. 173

As Whittaker was not an intellectual but a visual artist who took theatre seriously, he was doubly disadvantaged as a critic in the Toronto of the early post-war period. How was he able to write
for *The Globe and Mail* for twenty six years before retiring and continue to write for that paper after his retirement? Part of the answer lies in the previously-mentioned policies of *The Globe and Mail* to patiently develop its own writers and showcase them in attractive departments, and to extend its circulation nationally. (This cannot be overlooked when accounting for Whittaker's nationalism.) Also, Whittaker had a particular critical habit of style that enabled him to speak directly and intimately not only to the local but also to the national little theatre community of which he was such an active member. He used 'we' and 'they' a good deal in his reviews as code words to the constituents of the community theatres. 'We' were the mostly amateur members of those theatres. 'They', on the other hand, were those working in the professional, commercial theatres at both the national and international level. This was an extremely effective critical technique that enabled Whittaker to communicate with the entire readership of *The Globe and Mail* over a long period of time and is a primary imaginative key to his criticism. It served as a link between the two components of his double life that enabled him to use his work as a director and designer to advantage as a critic and vice versa. It enabled him not only to report professional and amateur theatre business but also to promote activity at the community theatre level and encourage a general raising of production standards on a national level. This technique did have a drawback, however, in that tempering the wind finding ways of saying th
critical than he might have been had he not been so mindful of them. Indeed, the criticism he wrote in New York was generally much more incisive, outspoken, and demanding than that which he wrote in Toronto because in Toronto he was talking to friends.

The origins of *The Globe and Mail* were in three Toronto newspapers: *The Globe*, *The Mail*, and *The Empire*. In 1895, *The Mail* and *The Empire* merged to form *The Mail and Empire*. In 1936, *The Mail and Empire* merged with *The Globe* to form *The Globe and Mail*. From 1873 onwards, Whittaker's predecessors who wrote for those papers up to and including the formation of *The Globe and Mail*, were E.R. Parkhurst, Hector Charlesworth, Lawrence Mason and Rowland Young. They were not models for Whittaker, however, and had no influence on his writing. When he began working at *The Globe and Mail*, he had little, if any, knowledge of their work, as he did not read the Toronto newspapers while he lived in Montreal. When I interviewed him in 1993, he told me that by the time he began working at *The Globe and Mail*, he already knew what a critic should do. This means that in addition to emulating S. Morgan-Powell and Tom Archer to some extent, he undoubtedly modelled himself after certain New York critics whom he read. (This helped make him seem a possible candidate to replace Walter Kerr on *The New York Herald-Tribune*.)

In "Canadian Theatre Criticism", Whittaker says that "to some extent Canadian theatre-writers have been influenced by outside critics" and he lists James Agate and George Jean Nathan as two critics Canadian writers could have read. Whittaker undoubtedly
read Agate but did not model himself after him. He would also have read Nathan, along with Brooks Atkinson and Alexander Woollcott, and would definitely have been influenced by all three.

James Agate was the most influential critic of his time in England. He was born in 1877 and wrote for The Manchester Guardian and The Saturday Review. From 1923 to 1947 he was the drama critic of The Sunday Times. He reprinted much of his newspaper criticism in over a dozen books. His criticism was entertaining and he believed that criticism was an art in itself. He stated this belief in a book called Alarums and Excursions, published in 1922. "A critic who is entrusted with the work of criticising actors who are artists," he said, "must necessarily be an artist himself." When it came to actually criticising actors, however, he was characterized by "his refusal to admit greatness in any actor later than Irving."

Agate began reviews by giving a history of famous actors who played a particular role. In More First Nights, for example, he compared a performance by Mervyn Johns to one by Garrick in the role of Sir John Brute in Farquhar's The Beaux' Stratagem, described in The London Chronicle on October 7, 1758. While Whittaker read Agate, Agate's specific method of comparing contemporary actors to actors performing in the same roles in the nineteenth century and earlier was useless in Montreal. Montreal did not have the history of performances to compare as he compared Johns and Garrick. However, Agate offered Whittaker a precedent for treating theatre criticism primarily as the recording and judging
of actors' performances; for treating theatre as something created by actors more than by playwrights or anyone else.

Twentieth-century American critics writing for New York newspapers were obvious models for Whittaker not only because of his many trips to New York but also because in some respects developments in the American theatre forecast and at times paralleled developments in the Canadian theatre. George Jean Nathan, who wrote his first criticisms for the New York Herald in 1905 and promoted the work of Eugene O'Neill in The Smart Set in the 1920s, is most famous for his fight for "a drama of ideas" in the American theatre. Assisted by Nathan's influence, the American audience as well as the American theatre slowly came to change its outlook, and by the end of the First World War the stage was cleared for the modern drama, foreign and domestic. Whittaker's interest in modern European and American dramatists would have been stimulated by Nathan and his understanding of them deepened by Nathan's insights. I detected Nathan's influence while interviewing Whittaker, when he said to me with assurance that some day Canada will have a theatre of ideas.

Brooks Atkinson, who was the drama critic of the New York Times from 1926 to 1960, generally appealed to a large and diverse readership because "he understood both the literary value of drama and the need for it to be a medium of active communication." He was also "gracious and gentlemanly" in his writing and "his views [were] generally tolerant." These qualities are present in Whittaker's writing as well and they help account for the length of his career at The Globe and Mail. Atkinson also discussed
craftsmanship in his reviews and reading him would have given Whittaker confidence to write about craftsmanship as extensively as he did.

Much of what is capricious, whimsical, frivolous, excessively promotional and exaggerated in Whittaker's style can be traced to the influence of Alexander Woollcott. He began writing as a police reporter for The New York Times and became a drama critic for that paper in 1914. Between 1922 and 1928 he was the critic for The New York Herald and then The Sun. From 1925 to 1928, he wrote criticism for The New York World. Woollcott was "the prototype of Sheridan Whiteside in The Man Who Came to Dinner." He could be highly emotional in his criticism but not without being engaging. He wrote so effectively in this style that it became acceptable for theatre critics to "Alexander Woollcott" (exaggerate, promote unashamedly, be highly emotional and capricious) as part of their style. There are many instances of this in Whittaker's criticism.

By the time Whittaker began writing for The Globe and Mail in 1949, he formed what can be called a theatre aesthetic which was composed of all the influencing factors that have been discussed in this chapter. Essentially, these factors fall into two groups: those which Whittaker received or studied as part of Canada's colonial theatre heritage, and those which were part of his creative work as an artist and theatre craftsman. The boundaries between these two groups are not absolute and they often meet and overlap. However, they do constitute two distinct categories that were an integral part of Whittaker's "double life." As will be
discussed in the next chapter, this placed Whittaker in a middle position between colonialism and Canadianism with respect to the developing Canadian theatre when he began working at The Globe and Mail.
Notes


2 Whittaker, "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past" 11.


4 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

5 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

6 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

7 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

8 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

9 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

10 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.


12 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.

13 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 244.

14 Whittaker, "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past" 12.

15 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.
Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

Whittaker, Whittaker's Theatricals 200.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 239.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 244.
33 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 246.
34 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 245.
35 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 246.
38 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 251.
42 Whittaker, Whittaker's Theatricals 119-120.
43 Whittaker, Whittaker's Theatricals 120.


Whittaker, "A city ringing with echoes of a theatrical past" 14.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 244.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 244.

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Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 250.

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Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 252.
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Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 252.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 255.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 255.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 255.


Bordman, The Oxford Companion to American Theatre 537.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 262.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 262.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 263.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 274.
84 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 255.
85 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 255-256.
86 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 256.
87 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 256.
88 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 256.
89 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 257.
90 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 257.
91 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 258.
92 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 258.
93 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 258.
94 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 258.
95 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 259.
96 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 259.
98 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 11.
99 Whittaker, interview, Ontario Historical Studies 28.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 325.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 287.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 290.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 308.


Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.
Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 240.


Harvie and Knowles 11.

Harvie and Knowles 18.

Harvie and Knowles 20.

Harvie and Knowles 20.

Harvie and Knowles 20-21.

Harvie and Knowles 20-21.

Harvie and Knowles 21.


132 Gould 44.
133 Gould 52.
134 Gould 164.
135 Gould 193.
136 Gould 193.
137 Gould 194.
138 Gould 194.
139 Gould 194.
140 Gould 52-53.
141 Ruskin 124.
142 Ruskin 124.
143 Ruskin 126.
144 Ruskin 126.
145 Ruskin 126.
147 Benson and Conolly, The Oxford Companion 470.


153 Anthony, *Stage Voices* 29.


156 Benson and Conolly, *The Oxford Companion* 349.


161 Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 344.

162 Ruskin 119

163 Ruskin 127.

164 Ruskin 127-128.

165 Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 309.
Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 312.

Whittaker, "Whittaker's Montreal" 299.

Bryden xvii.


Bryden xvii-xviii.

Bryden xvii.

Bryden xix.

Bryden xix.

This observation was made by Mavor Moore in conversation with Ronald Bryden.

Herbert Whittaker, personal interview, 6 July 1993.

Whittaker, "Canadian Theatre Criticism" 345.


Herbert Whittaker, personal interview, 14 July 1993.
Whittaker's start in theatre criticism in Toronto coincided with the major postwar Canadian debate about culture, criticism and national identity. He was not an intellectual and probably did not read The Canadian Forum regularly, but he could not have lived through that time without absorbing some of the current discussion about what Canada needed of criticism and should expect critics to do. Largely, the discussion was about Canadian content and the importation of artistic standards.

In 1928, A.J.M. Smith published an article in The Canadian Forum called "Wanted - Canadian Criticism". He began the article by remarking that Canadians "are becoming increasingly 'Canada-conscious'" but "critical enquiry into first principles which directs a new literature as tradition guides an old one" is missing in Canadian books and journals. "Hasty adulation mingles with unintelligent condemnation to make our book reviewing an amusing art," he said, "but of criticism as it might be useful there is nothing." Smith argued that "without a body of critical opinion to hearten and direct them Canadian writers are like a leaderless army." He believed that until "a critical system," was formulated, Canadian writers would be unable to write creatively and maintain their allegiance to art. Smith then outlined "the tasks that await such a criticism." These were that criticism (at the time concerned primarily with moral criteria), should concern itself more with aesthetics, and at the same time encourage writing by Canadians that is realistic and that includes...
irony and cynicism. This would be the task of "the critic-militant". The task of "the critic contemplative", or "philosophical critic" would be to "examine the fundamental position of the artist in a new community." Smith thought that at that time, Canadians writing nationally "used clichéd themes and trite Canadian images to produce a false, romantic ideal of Canada." Smith's "Wanted - Canadian Criticism" "was the formal declaration of a split between those critics who supported modernist sensibilities and those who adhered to nationalistic goals."

In 1933, Edward Killoran Brown published an article called "The Immediate Present in Canadian Literature" in the Sewanee Review. In the article, Brown agreed with Smith about the lack of appropriate Canadian criticism. Brown was an associate editor for The Canadian Forum from 1930 to 1933 and he wrote over fifty articles for that publication in his lifetime. His book, On Canadian Poetry, published in 1943, is an extensive study of Canadian literature. A number of Brown's essays about Canadian literature and criticism were collected and published in 1977 in a book called Responses and Evaluations edited by David Staines. One of Brown's observations was that "a colonial spirit," psychologically restricting for Canadian writers, was one of the reasons why vital Canadian criticism was lacking. Brown's type of cultural criticism, which holds that society and writing are inseparable, remains the most widely-used method of literary analysis in Canada.

In 1943, Smith published The Book of Canadian Poetry. His
introduction to the book was
the source of a lengthy critical debate between John Sutherland and himself, in which Northrop Frye and Milton Wilson, among others played intermittent roles, and which marked the two major directions modernist writing took in Canada following the Great War. In that essay Smith divides Canadian poetry into two groups that cut across period, movement, and location. The first, a 'cosmopolitan' poetry... utilizes man-centred perspectives, and deals with 'the civilizing culture of ideas'; its opposite, 'native' poetry, which is emotional and unintellectual, is concerned with individual awareness, with unique and specific events and locales, and with providing a realistic description of environment. 13

Northrop Frye's essays, published largely in The Canadian Forum and Literary History of Canada, set the standard for criticism in Canada from the 1940s to the 1960s, and a number of them will be discussed in this chapter. The Bush Garden, "a 14 retrospective collection" of these essays, was published in 1971. "Canada and Its Poetry", Frye's review of Smith's anthology, is reprinted in The Bush Garden. In this essay, Frye

avoids dealing directly with Smith's categories (though he later suggested that every Canadian writer struggles with both the cosmopolitan and native urges). Frye states that there are definable characteristics of Canadian poetry and that a national writing is preferable to the 'creative schizophrenia' of a colonial one, which includes both a large imperial vision and a cramped provincial or regional perspective. 15

Frye used the terms 'colonial' and 'national' to describe the two major directions in modernist Canadian writing. It is also argued that for Frye, "the picture of man in epic struggle against native reality rivals any mere cosmopolitan vision." This is how I am using the terms 'colonialism' and 'nationalism' in relation to Whittaker's criticism, as two rival visions or directions identified by major Canadian critics in Canadian poetry that were
also present in Canadian theatre and drama.

Smith's theories of Canadian criticism had a basis in his belief that Canada as a nation had passed out of adolescence into adulthood. In 1948, Vincent Massey, who had been Canada's high commissioner in London during the war years, used essentially the same analogy in his book called On Being Canadian to describe Canada as a nation that had come of age during World War II. In 1949, the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, with Massey as its chairman, was established. In the report produced by that commission, generally referred to as the Massey Report, the commissioners recommended

that a body be created to be known as the Canada Council for the Encouragement of the Arts, Letters, Humanities and Social Sciences to stimulate and to help voluntary organizations within these fields, to foster Canada's cultural relations abroad, to perform the functions of a national commission for UNESCO, and to devise and administer a system of scholarships as recommended. 17

The formation of a body within the government of Canada that would "stimulate the arts and letters" and administer funding, was a major step forward in the cultural life of the country. In 1951, Royal Commission Studies: A Selection of Essays Prepared for the Royal Commission on National Development in the Arts, Letters and Sciences, was published separately from the actual Massey Report. Massey pointed out in his introduction to this publication that

soon after the beginning of our work, when the full extent and complexity of the task became apparent, it occurred to us that we would be greatly aided and that our ultimate Report would be enriched if we could call upon the specialized knowledge of certain Canadian authorities in the various subjects which we were instructed to review. 19
The commissioners consulted Robertson Davies as a Canadian authority on the theatre. Davies was born in Thamesville, Ontario in 1913 and was educated at Upper Canada College in Toronto, Queen's University in Kingston and Balliol College, Oxford. In 1938, he joined the Old Vic Company and acted bit parts, taught theatre history in the company's school and did literary work for the director for two seasons. In 1940, he returned to Canada and until 1942 was literary editor of Toronto's Saturday Night magazine. Davies' father owned the Peterborough Examiner and Davies joined the editorial staff of that newspaper in 1942. Along with his two brothers, he became editor and owner of the Examiner in 1946. After the war, he wrote plays and directed for little theatres and professional companies.

Davies prepared an essay entitled "A Dialogue on the State of the Theatre in Canada" for the Royal Commission. The commissioners relied heavily on Davies' essay and it became the basis of the theatre section of their report. The opinions concerning the theatre and drama in Canada are consistent with Davies' outlook. The commissioners, like Davies, placed drama in a high position in the cultural arena. "The drama has been in the past, and may be again," they said, "not only the most striking symbol of a nation's culture, but the central structure enshrining much that is finest in a nation's spiritual and artistic greatness."

However, the commissioners painted a bleak picture of the actual condition of drama in Canada at the time. They argued that the very existence of the theatre in Canada was precarious and that
the heritage of world drama was largely unknown to Canadians. Only 21
a few "overworked and ill-supported" repertory theatres and the
hard-working amateur companies had kept the theatre alive in
Canada. They were compelled to state that

in Canada there is nothing comparable, whether in play-
production or in writing for the theatre, to what is going on
in other countries with which we would like to claim
intellectual kinship and cultural equality. 22

The commissioners suggested that while Canada was culturally
up to date in several areas, its theatre and drama were lagging far
behind that of other countries. They were also concerned with
regional development of the arts and they pointed out that "there
are considerable regional differences in the prosperity and
effectiveness of the theatre in Canada." The commissioners did
not conclude that a deficiency in theatrical talent (writers,
producers, actors) was hampering development but that "this talent
at present finds little encouragement and no outlet apart from the
Canadian Broadcasting Corporation which provides at the moment the
greatest and the almost unique stimulus to Canadian drama." 24
They added that "the C.B.C. drama, however, is an inadequate
substitute for a living theatre." 25

Other impediments to development that the commissioners cited
were the complete absence of facilities for advanced training in
the arts of the theatre (primarily because of the lack of suitable
playhouses) and the lack of a national theatre in Canada. It was
noted in the Report, however, that in spite of these problems,
"there still remain in Montreal, Toronto, Ottawa and Vancouver,
active theatre companies which have been able, consistently or
periodically, to maintain professional levels of production and to preserve at least a limited public taste for the living theatre." The phrase "professional levels" indicates that the kind of theatre being referred to was primarily non-professional. In this light, 'groups' would have been a more appropriate word in this passage in the Massey Report than 'companies'. In the early 1950s in Canada, only les Compagnons de Saint-Laurent in Montreal and the New Play Society in Toronto could be called 'companies' because of their professionalism. (Originally amateur when founded in 1937, les Compagnons turned professional in 1948.)

It was emphasized in the Massey Report that "there is undoubtedly in Canada a widespread interest in the theatre," and the achievements of the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation and the Dominion Drama Festival were acknowledged. It was stated in the report that "we suffer from no lack of playwrights, of producers or of actors where opportunity exists for their abilities," and that "the Dominion Drama Festival is now established as an important national movement and as a valuable unifying force in our cultural life." In spite of this, though, the commissioners remarked that "in Canada the writing of plays, in spite of the few vigorous writers who have found encouragement in the C.B.C., has lagged far behind the other literary arts."

This dearth of writing for the theatre was attributed to the lack of theatre companies and playhouses in the country and also to the fact that Canadians were "addicted to the cinema." As the local theatres were unable to compete with movies, the
commissioners pointed out that they were eventually "taken over by the great motion picture companies which not infrequently found it necessary to demolish the theatre stages in their plans for conversion." This loss of conventional theatres suitable for live performance was undoubtedly one of the greatest impediments to the development of theatre and drama in Canada.

It was suggested in the Massey Report that a revival of the theatre could take place only if federal subsidies were provided to build "suitable playhouses throughout Canada" to subsidize travelling "Canadian professional companies." Including more drama in the school curriculum to make it a greater part of formal education was another recommendation. However, the commissioners stressed that

nowhere in Canada does there exist advanced training for the playwright, the producer, the technician or the actor; nor does it seem rational to advocate the creation of suitable schools of dramatic art in Canada when present prospects for the employment in Canada of the graduates seem so unfavourable.

The commissioners concluded that for economic, sociological, and aesthetic reasons, "the legitimate theatre which thirty years ago flourished throughout Canada has disappeared." They acknowledged, though, that while playhouses could be restored if enough money was made available, it did not necessarily follow that "a renaissance of the theatre in Canada" would take place. In other words, even if the material conditions were altered to an extent that would allow for a revitalization of the legitimate theatre in Canada, the cultural climate of the country would not necessarily be supportive of these developments.
Davies' testimony in his "Dialogue on the State of the Theatre in Canada" prompted the commissioners to state that "the theatre has now reached a critical point in its development in Canada." Confident that the aforementioned "widespread interest in the theatre" was indeed a reality in Canada and something strong enough to build upon, they explored the idea of a national theatre. Consistent with Davies' point of view, they argued that a national theatre was not to consist

in an elaborate structure built in Ottawa or elsewhere, but rather in a company or companies of players who would present the living drama in even the more remote communities of Canada and who would in addition give professional advice to local amateur dramatic societies.

As the permanent company was to be a travelling company, the commissioners conjectured that this would encourage Canadian cities and towns to develop facilities suitable for the regular appearance of such a company. In the off-season, the members of the permanent company would work as directors of summer theatres or as instructors at summer schools of the theatre, and this permanent company could also represent Canada at international theatre festivals. Perhaps most importantly, such a permanent company would "encourage writing for the Canadian theatre and provide an opportunity for presentation of Canadian plays."

The commissioners stated that it would be 'disastrous' for a national theatre to be conceived of "as a playhouse erected in the capital or in one of the larger centres." They outlined that a national theatre school should include

a well-designed and adequately-equipped theatre, which would include suitable studios for advanced instruction and
experimentation in stage-craft, costuming, make-up, lighting, and in other technical skills. They thought that the national company's theatre would undoubtedly "serve as a model for communities throughout Canada proposing to construct theatres as municipal enterprises, and its staff would be competent to advise societies throughout Canada on all theatrical matters."

So conceived, then, a national theatre and affiliated school could not only revitalize theatre and drama in Canada but also lead it in new directions. Although the commissioners stated in their report that "the field of formal education lies outside the competence of this Commission," their proposed solution to the problems facing theatre and drama in Canada focused largely on education. Government funding for theatre and drama was increased as a result of the Massey Report. A national theatre school was developed, although it was not until a decade later. "An elaborate structure" was eventually built in Ottawa, not simply to promote theatre, but all the arts. A national theatre, such as the one described in the report, never did develop. One reason for this may have been a concern which Davies and the commissioners preparing the Massey Report addressed with respect to Canada - that of regionalism.

The dialogue in Davies' essay had been shaped in part by a discussion with Michel Saint-Denis. In the section on the theatre in Canada in the Massey Report, the area of criticism was not addressed. The issue was raised by the fictional characters Lovewit and Trueman in their dialogue, however. In effect, their
conversation provided a continuation of the discussion presented in the Massey Report. The passage of the dialogue concerning criticism merits quoting:

LOVEWIT: The emergence of such a [National Theatre] company would be an interesting phenomenon; I have sometimes wondered if criticism would have any considerable part in shaping and polishing it.

TRUeman: Informed criticism could do much, but informed criticism is an uncommon thing in the periodicals of our country. If a critic is to be of any use to an artist, he must understand and love the art he criticizes, and he must be deeply versed in its literature and tradition, as well. He must know at least as much about the art as one of its practitioners. The hack critic, the mere reviewer, the reporter given leave to editorialize, is of no positive value and can be a real danger if he is himself a maligned or frustrated man.

LOVEWIT: Our attitude towards criticism is too deeply affected, I fear, by that of the United States. There, a critic is too often employed merely to give his opinion on a matter which he has not studied deeply, because he is a wit or can pass for a wit. This style of criticism is dangerous at its best, and when imitated by men of meagre gifts it is execrable.

TRUeman: A fine critic is himself something of an artist, and he may, in some cases, encourage an art or even bring forth new developments in it. One of the principal tasks of every good critic of the theatre is to memorialize great performances and events in its history; part of his genius is to know when these events occur, for they are not always obvious. But it is to be feared that most critics serve the theatre as a flea serves a dog - as an irritating parasite which may at times bring the dog into derision. 44

Davies' criteria for a critic were demanding and his standards were high. He is suggesting through this dialogue not simply that knowing the theatre's tradition implies international standards on the critic's part but that Canadian critics must demand that the Canadian works meet international standards. Able to locate and identify Canadian drama and theatre in relation to world
On February 28, 1959, The Toronto Daily Star published "Condemnation Can Be Kindness" by Davies. This article was a rejoinder to an article he had written previously "in defence of a decent standard of poetry" in the country. He posed the question, "What is a critic?" and provided a detailed answer:

His tasks are many, and one of them is to insist upon the preservation of high standards in the art he criticizes.... Poets think of themselves as an oppressed group, but the fact is that too many of them are coddled and cosseted by their circle until they have an inflated idea of the merit of their work.... Why bother with it then? Because I do not feel that Canadian critics are yet in a position to send out printed slips...saying they will not read unsolicited manuscripts. There are too many Canadian writers who need help, and who do not know any other way of getting it. If I slighted a single Canadian writer of promise by refusing to look at his stuff when he sent it to me, I should feel that I had failed in something which is, in the present state of Canadian letters, my duty.

In this article, Davies emphasized that a Canadian critic (in this case a literary critic criticizing poetry) cannot expect much Canadian writing to meet international standards. Nonetheless, he must invoke those standards to teach promising writers. In "Condemnation Can Be Kindness", Davies further illustrated his point of view:

It is not given to everybody to be an artist; but to be ignorant of one's craft, and yet to claim the respect owing to a craftsman is blameworthy, and certainly it will continue to be blamed by me, and by every critic who respects himself.

Although these statements by Davies were directed primarily towards the critic of poetry, he touched upon aspects of criticism that concerned the critic of Canadian drama as well. Not simply to insist upon the preservation of high standards but to know what
those standards should be and why; to be able to recognize talent in young writers and help and encourage those who had it while not praising uninspired or undisciplined work; to understand and insist upon sound craftsmanship not only in the writing but also in the theatrical production of plays: these were 'tasks' as relevant to the drama critics of 1943 as they are to this day. Davies' observation that a critic is a teacher, or at least a helper of writers, who "insist[s] upon the preservation of high standards in the art he criticizes," is central to his idea of what criticism in Canada should be.

The arguments concerning the arts in the Massey Report were based upon the belief that Canada, as an independent nation after the war, should have mature arts of its own. Not only should Canada be able to produce art as well as any other nation, but also it should have the sort of cultural identity other nations express by means of their arts. The question of whether the arts in Canada should be measured by a national or international scale was never really confronted in the report. There is an underlying assumption, however, that if Canadians produce true, indigenous artistic self-expression, Canadian arts will quickly hold their own in the international arena. Davies presented convincing arguments for high international standards in Canadian dramatic art. He can be seen as the spokesman for a school of thought that believed Canada's arts did not yet match those of older countries, and that critics should not conceal this fact. Rather, according to this school, critics should use the highest international standards and demand that
Canadian artists master the crafts necessary to meet those standards.

A second school of thought regarding the arts was that the first requisite was for Canada to achieve or learn to express the kind of national identity other nations express in art. The important task for Canadian critics, therefore, was to judge our arts as expressions of our national identity and to help create the artistic consciousness of ourselves that a nation's art flourishes by providing. If Davies was a principal spokesman for the first school of thought, Brown was a principal spokesman for this second school. In On Canadian Poetry, he presented arguments for the need to emphasize local and indigenous elements in the development of Canadian literature. His arguments were as strong as Davies' were for high international standards.

It is significant that Brown began his commentary on the state of Canadian letters and culture in On Canadian Poetry by discussing American and British writers:

The reality of the unity among American writers is now so obvious as to be accepted by everyone who is not a crank. It has been demonstrated in histories, anthologies and critical studies, and not once but a hundred times, that to consider an American writer or group of American writers as American is one of the most illuminating approaches one could make. 48 Brown was quick to point out that "there are...other illuminating approaches" to the study of American literature. "But the study of Emerson against his American background," he continued, is just as rewarding as the study of Carlyle against his British background. This is what is meant by saying that American literature is a useful concept, and the study of American literature an
illuminating study." Brown believed that Canadian literature was also a useful concept and its study just as rewarding. In 1943, however, he knew of detractors. Brown rebutted his detractors using bold terminology, as when he outlined the benefits of his critical approach towards American and British literature:

I think the time has come when to doubt the value of the concept of a Canadian literature, or an Australian, is to be a crank: a beginning has been made towards demonstrating that among Canadian and Australian writers as among Americans there is a peculiar unity, a unity sufficiently important as to make the approach to Canadian or Australian writers as Canadians or Australians a sharply illuminating approach. 50

In recognizing this unity among Canadian writers and insisting upon its literary importance, Brown laid the foundation for a sound critical approach to literature written in Canada by Canadians. Essentially, Brown suggested that a Canadian criticism for Canadian arts would not just be 'useful' or 'illuminating' but would set up standards and criteria for Canadian arts different from those elsewhere. The question of who the native Canadian writers were was still a moot one at this time, however. Outside Quebec, there had not been many writers writing in Canada who actually had been born in Canada.

In the first section of the first chapter of On Canadian Poetry, Brown cited a definition of Canadian literature and Canadian writers set down by R.P. Baker in his History of English Canadian Literature to Confederation, first published in 1920. He quoted Baker as having said, "it is wiser to consider only those authors of Canadian descent who maintained their connection with their native country and those of European birth and education who
culture that run among the majority, the accent on our

morbidity which is prevalent and determinant to the culture of

our great distances, the presence among us of a large

conclusions as follows:

Internationally (extremely difficult). Brown summed up these

time. He clearly illustrated that while a thread of unity could be

observed in the literature itself, economic and social conditions

traded this kind of stage. In general, however, Brown depicted a

more significant picture of the state of Canadian dramatic literature at the

surprise us when the theatre tangible across the country.

authors he examined in this quest to chart the development of

element of indeterminateness, "but he believed it would cover

Brown acknowledged that this definition contained "to have an

among us. This important creative work and led much of their literary life

whether they may have been born, once arrived in Canada did

creative years in this country and also writing by those who,

theatre for radio is making extraordinary advances; and in

In a section of a 1948 essay, Brown made a specific statement

Canadian poetry.

In agreement with this, he stated, "but the lack should not

about the condition of dramatic literature in Canada. We continue

In accepting this definition I should like to develop it to a

definition:

Brown expanded this

105
common speech with Britain and the United States - here are three facts with enormous economic importance for literature. The sum of their effect is the exceedingly thin market for the author who depends on Canadian sales. 55

Brown suggested that an author resorting to magazine writing was choosing "a precarious solution," and he stated that "the serious Canadian writer has a choice among three modes of combining the pursuit of literature with success in keeping alive and fed." These were: emigrating, earning one's living by some non-literary pursuit or, while continuing to reside in Canada, becoming, economically, a member of another nation and civilization. Brown thought Bliss Carman was "our most notable exile" and Archibald Lampman, who decided to work as a postal clerk, was someone who made the second choice much to the detriment of his artistic life.

Brown's observations of Morley Callaghan and Mazo de la Roche, two writers who chose the third solution, provide us with some insight into writers of drama in Canada. Brown thought that Toronto, as Callaghan depicted it in his novels and shorter tales, was "not an individualized city but simply a representative one." For Brown, Callaghan's Toronto was a city without recognizable features. Brown criticized de la Roche for her similar treatment of the rural Ontario setting. He believed they did this to appeal to a wider (British and American) reading public, and concluded that in the work of both writers, "an alien audience has shaped the treatment of Canadian life."

Brown placed a high priority on national and regional aspects of Canadian literature and he concluded the third section of the
first chapter of On Canadian Poetry by emphasizing that

a great opportunity has been refused by Mr. Callaghan - the
opportunity of drawing the peculiarities of Toronto in full
vividness and force...here was a great theme calling aloud for
imaginative treatment. Had Mr. Callaghan not been essentially
a part of American civilization, it would have forced itself
upon his perceptive and completely realistic mind. There is
also something unique in the life of rural Ontario, something
that no novelist has succeeded in catching, and Miss de la
Roche has refused an opportunity perhaps no less golden than
Toronto offers. 62

In the fourth section of this chapter, Brown delved even
further into the problems which faced writers of serious literature
in Canada. He outlined "the psychological factors...against which
the growth of a Canadian literature must struggle."  Here Brown
cited the colonial spirit of Canada (dominated by both Britain
and the United States) and the derivative quality of life that
it engendered, as the source of the problem. Brown said this meant

that a colony lacks the spiritual energy to rise above
routine, and that it lacks this energy because it does not
adequately believe in itself. It applies to what it has
standards which are imported, and therefore artificial
and distorting. It sets the great good place not in its
present, nor in its past nor in its future, but somewhere
outside its own borders, somewhere beyond its own
possibilities. 64

Brown was articulating one of the essential problems related
to culture and the arts in Canada, a problem which Northrop Frye
later brought into sharp focus in his writings: that of the absence
of a distinctive identity. Brown believed that in the current
social environment, interest in the regional life of Canada, so
essential to the development of literature, could not be properly
stimulated. He stressed that "it will be obvious that in a colonial
or semi-colonial community neither artist nor audience will have
the passionate and peculiar interest in their immediate surroundings that is required. Canada is a state in which such an interest exists only among a few."

In *On Canadian Poetry*, Brown spoke of Canadian colonialism in relation to the United States as being "unavowed but...deep" and it was in this latter part of the first chapter that he made one of the most astute observations in the book as to why Canadian literature developed the way it had:

The praise of a couple of New York reviewers will outweigh the unanimous enthusiasm of Canadian journals from coast to coast. There is every reason to suppose that...our cultural dependence on the Americans will grow. If it does, our literature may be expected to become emphatically regionalist; of the dangers of regionalism, something will be said a little later.

In the first sentence of this passage, Brown has indicated that a review[er] can have a strong impact on a reading or viewing public. In making the point that Canadians place more weight upon the opinions of American than Canadian reviewers, Brown also stressed the importance of reviewers in the development of art and culture in a country. Brown emphasized the need for the development of a Canadian literature in *On Canadian Poetry*, and took for granted the importance of the critic or the reviewer in the process.

While Brown did not specifically address the topic of criticism in *On Canadian Poetry*, in 1951 he published an essay entitled "Is a Canadian Critic Possible?", in which he made important statements about the subject. Brown used the topic of a session on criticism held at Carleton College in Ottawa in
December, 1950 as the title for his essay. Posing the question, "What is a critic?", Brown said that the answer depended upon some definitions. The specific answer Brown provided was: "He is a sensitive reader who can explain his responses and evaluations." In this essay, he praised E.T. Owen for his critical work, "The Story of the Iliad", but concluded by saying that

if 'The Story of the Iliad' had been cited in the discussion at Carleton College, someone would have protested, I think, that this was not at all the kind of book desired from a Canadian critic. It is a book that might have been written in France or in England - although there are few persons in any country who could have achieved it.

As Brown presented it, one of the primary reasons for the lack of good critical writing about Canadian literature at the time was the lack of suitable Canadian literature. This situation was complicated further by the factor which Brown pointed out at the end of this essay:

What is really lacking is not Canadian criticism in any sense of the term but an audience for it. As I have said before in this place - and expect to say again - Canadians do not care what other Canadians think.

In Brown's view, not only did Canadians place much more value upon the opinions of American reviewers, but also they did not care about the critical opinions of other Canadians. The picture he painted was grim.

As much as anything else, Brown's comments draw to the foreground the question of what is meant by the notion of culture and how it can be defined. Brown's concern was with the development of a Canadian literature, as distinct from literatures of other countries. In this context, culture can have two meanings: the
culture Canada already has, meaning the way the society lives, and the culture Canada does not have, which would make it more cultivated and which is how cultivated people the world over live. In an essay entitled "The Immediate Present in Canadian Literature", Brown gave a clear definition of what he meant when he used the word 'culture':

By culture I mean nothing exotic, but only the knowledge and love of the best that has been thought and said, a recognition of the excellent and a resolution to rest satisfied with nothing less, a liberation from the vulgar, the superficial, the provincial. Culture leads one to care more for Lear and the Fool upon the blasted heath than for any tear-sodden film [from] Hollywood. 71

It is clear from these statements that, in Brown's view, national distinctions were of secondary importance to "the best that has been thought and said." Here, Brown is expressing an idea of culture that is derived from Matthew Arnold's definition of criticism: "a disinterested endeavour to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." For Brown, then, criticism and culture were closely related. However, he stated in this same essay that

the outlook is brighter for our poetry and fiction than for our criticism and since to write great criticism supposes culture, as well as large information and excellent taste, the plight of our Canadian criticism need not surprise us. Culture is not a national god in Canada. 73

Brown deduced that the lack of 'culture' in Canadian society resulted in an "aesthetic insensitiveness" in the public. He attributed this to a residual element of the frontier which remains in the people and argued that "attitudes to life change more deliberately than the material conditions of life." Brown
maintained that as a result, "we have not attained the balance of mind which exists at the centres of civilization." Literature in this cultural context is considered a luxury.

The views expressed in "The Immediate Present in Canadian Literature" are consistent with those Brown put forward in *On Canadian Poetry*. In Canada's "disguised form of frontier life," the arts could hold at best a recreative function, their "value as interpretation" being "lost in the exclusive emphasis on their value as diversion." As Brown saw it, the artist in such a society was not a part of his community and was therefore not a part of the national life. He thought that as a result, "the attitude of sincere and profound writers will and must be one of protest and revolt." Elaborating on this idea, he added:

What I claim is, merely, that here and now the Canadian artist is properly in rebellion against the Canadian community: that his rebellion is in some sort indispensible to his intellectual and artistic integrity; and that the guilt for his rebellion lies not with him but with the community of which he is, by his own tacit wish, no organic part.

Frederick Philip Grove, a writer whom Brown regarded as a master of Canadian literature, remarked that "as far as the general public goes, Canada is a non-conductor with regard to any kind of spiritual current." Brown said of this statement:

That is the gravest indictment that any artist can make against a community, for, as a great American expatriate wrote to James Russell Lowell, the artist's first need is 'an audience which can understand what is good and what is bad.' Without such a 'sounding board', he continues, 'the heart grows into stone.' The hearts of our Canadian masters have every excuse for stoniness: but the fact is that the best of them are turbulent and indignant rather than petrified.

The fact that the Canadian artist had not only endured but had
also emerged "turbulent and indignant" in the midst of a cultural desert, was encouraging. But it was obviously desirable that the artist develop in a more nurturing environment. "An audience which can understand what is good and what is bad," is, in essence, an audience with a developed critical sense. Therefore, just as it was the duty of the Canadian critic, as Robertson Davies saw it, to help the Canadian writer, then logically, it would seem that the critic's duty was also to lead the general public in providing a nurturing, responsive audience for the writer. If one of the many tasks of the critic was "to insist upon the preservation of high standards in the art he criticizes," as Davies maintained, then a critic educating an artist as to what those standards were, and insisting upon them in his work, would at the same time encourage a creative and critical response in the public.

Brown believed that Canadians had to turn their backs on the frontier as a necessary step towards the birth of great art. "When they have done so they will begin, as so many Americans have already done," he said, "to perceive the great and indispensible function of the artist, the priest of truth and beauty, and I venture to prophesy great artists will then be born." Brown knew that this was not a simple process and that various phases had to be worked through. Although Brown stated that "in the end...regional art will fail because it stresses the superficial and the peculiar at the expense, at least, if not to the exclusion, of the fundamental and universal," he conjectured that "it may be that the next important stage of Canadian literature will be
strongly particularist and regionalist: one remembers what a force regionalism was in American literature in the years after the Civil War."

The editors of *An Anthology of Canadian Literature in English*, Volume I, made the following comments about Brown's writing:

Brown's book [*On Canadian Poetry*] established Canadian literature as an entity unto itself rather than a branch of British or American writing. *On Canadian Poetry*, as well as Brown's other Canadian essays...introduced close textual analysis to Canadian literary studies. This methodology, along with the mythopoeic approach to our literature of Northrop Frye (who succeeded Brown as the poetry critic of 'Letters in Canada') has since dominated Canadian literary criticism. In examining Canadian poetry Brown looked to the social context of the Canadian imagination, while Frye has been more interested in the imaginative context of Canadian society. 85

In his preface to *The Bush Garden*, Frye, as Brown had done, began his commentary by discussing a problem which he termed "the famous Canadian problem of identity:"

The question of identity is primarily a cultural and imaginative question, and there is always something vegetable about the imagination, something sharply limited in range.... Similarly, the question of Canadian identity, so far as it affects the creative imagination, is not a 'Canadian' question at all, but a regional question. 87

Frye described Canada as consisting of a number of distinct geographic regions. The human imagination had to come to terms with "a global civilization of jet planes, international hotels, and disappearing landmarks - that is, an obliterated environment." For Frye, "the tension between [a] political sense of unity and an imaginative sense of locality is the essence of whatever the word 'Canadian' means." He elaborated on these concepts:

Thus when the CBC is instructed by Parliament to do what it can to promote Canadian unity and identity, it is not always realized that unity and identity are quite different
things to be promoting, and that in Canada they are perhaps more different than they are anywhere else. Identity is local and regional, rooted in the imagination and in works of culture; unity is national in reference, international in perspective, and rooted in a political feeling. There are, of course, containing imaginative forms which are common to the whole country, even if not peculiar to Canada. 90

Frye thought that the essence of Canadian unity was understood in a geographically-conditioned "east-west feeling" but cautioned that if the tension between the political sense of unity and the imaginative sense of locality was given up, "and the two elements of unity and identity are confused or assimilated to each other, we get the two endemic diseases of Canadian life. Assimilating identity to unity produces the empty gestures of cultural nationalism; assimilating unity to identity produces the kind of provincial isolation which is now called separatism." 91 With these arguments, Frye was providing an explanation for the regional aspects of Canadian art which Brown considered to be so dangerous, yet inevitable. For Frye, the geographic region in which an individual was raised had a formative impact on the development of his creative imagination.

Frye believed that unity meant something different from "cultural nationalism" and was to be considered as something quite apart from identity and uniformity. He asserted that a sense of unity is the opposite of a sense of uniformity. Uniformity, where everyone 'belongs'...produces a society which seems comfortable at first but is totally lacking in human dignity. Real unity tolerates dissent and rejoices in variety of outlook and tradition. 92

The artist in such a social context would be free not only to explore individual identity through art but also to have that
individuality recognized as an important dimension of the art of that society. What is clear from statements such as these in The Bush Garden is that Frye believed art could only be fully understood in the context of its milieu. For Frye, this was not simply a way of giving the Canadian arts, specifically literature, an approach for criticism, when it clearly had not achieved what literature of other countries had achieved. Rather, it revealed his idea that it was the most important duty of a critic to come to terms with the integral meaning of each work of art.

In his "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology", written in 1956, Frye asserted that "it is not a nation but an environment that makes an impact on poets, and poetry can only deal with the imaginative aspects of that environment." This environment, as described in "The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry", written in 1946, was a formidable one:

Above all, [Canada] is a country in which nature makes a direct impression on the artist's mind, an impression of its primeval lawlessness and moral nihilism, its indifference to the supreme value placed on life within human society. 94

In 1965, in his "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada", Frye developed further his theory of the influence of nature on the Canadian artist:

I have long been impressed in Canadian poetry by a tone of deep terror in regard to nature. It is not a terror of the dangers of discomforts or even the mysteries of nature, but a terror of the soul at something that these things manifest. 95

This impression led Frye to conclude that there were two central themes in Canadian poetry: "one a primarily comic theme of satire and exuberance, the other a primarily tragic theme of loneliness
and terror."

This response to the natural environment, along with other social and cultural factors, led Frye to conclude that Canadians had developed "a garrison mentality" which influenced their art. He described it as follows:

Small and isolated communities surrounded with a physical or psychological 'frontier'...are bound to develop what we may provisionally call a garrison mentality.

A garrison is a closely knit and beleaguered society, and its moral and social values are unquestionable. Frye noted in his "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada" that "one theme which runs all through this book is the obvious and unquenchable desire of the Canadian cultural public to identify itself through its literature." The "garrison mentality" seems to be at the centre of this identifying process and it is not something which remains relevant only to the past. Rather, as Frye pointed out:

As the centre of Canadian life moves from the fortress to the metropolis, the garrison mentality changes correspondingly...it becomes more of a revolutionary garrison within a metropolitan society. But though it changes from a defence to an attack on what society accepts as conventional standards, the literature it produces, at every stage, tends to be rhetorical.... The conflict involved is between the poetic impulse to construct and the rhetorical impulse to assert, and the victory of the former is the sign of the maturing of the writer. It was not only the prevalence of the rhetorical that Frye noticed in Canadian literature but also the prevalence of the narrative. This, too, he attributed to the writer's response to his natural environment. In "The Narrative Tradition in English-Canadian Poetry", Frye drew a number of remarkable parallels between English and Canadian narrative traditions. He pointed out
that "the Canadian narrative is frequently cast in the form of
dialogue or literary drama." Indeed, Frye thought that the
narrative impulse was so prevalent in Canadian literature that
although "the bulk of [Canadian poetry] is lyrical in form, a
great deal of it is not lyrical in spirit, and when a Canadian
poem has failed to achieve adequate expression, this may often be
the reason."

In "Canada and Its Poetry", written in 1943, Frye identified
what he believed to be "the central theme of Canadian poetry: the
riddle of what a character in Mair's Tecumseh calls 'inexplicable
life'." Frye thought that this was "really a riddle of
inexplicable death: the fact that life struggles and suffers in a
nature which is blankly indifferent to it." In a country where
such a riddle was the central theme of its poetry, where narrative
was the predominant form, and where a "garrison mentality"
prevailed amongst its people, what other standard of criticism
would be useful other than one that was generated from within the
social and cultural milieu and from within the poetry itself?

In "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology", Frye made an
important reference to myth in poetry. "When we look for the
qualities in Canadian poetry that illustrate the poet's response to
the specific environment that we call approximately Canada, we are
really looking for the mythopoeic qualities in that poetry."
In his preface to The Bush Garden, Frye, whose use of the word
'myth' has been misinterpreted, explained that he meant by it "the
structural principle of a poem itself." In "Preface to an
Uncollected Anthology", he elaborated on this concept:

We are concerned here, however, not so much with mythopoeic poetry as with myth as a shaping principle of poetry. Every good lyrical poet has a certain structure of imagery as typical of him as his handwriting, held together by certain metaphors, and sooner or later he will produce one or more poems that seem to be at the centre of that structure. These poems are in the formal sense his mythical poems, and they are for the critic the imaginative keys to his work. 106

Frye, with these statements, was presenting what seemed to be the most viable starting point for meaningful criticism of Canadian literature. The poet would reveal his reaction to his natural and social environment through a structure of imagery personal to him. The task of the critic was to recognize what the myth or "shaping principle" of the poetry was and this would provide the critic with the imaginative keys to the work. In leading up to these statements in his "Preface to an Uncollected Anthology", Frye outlined "certain critical principles" which he believed were "essential for dealing with Canadian poetry." 107

While outlining these principles, he also addressed some of the problems of Canadian literature which Brown had outlined in his writings. For example, Frye asserted that a cultivated Canadian should take the same kind of interest in Canadian poetry that he 108 has in Canadian history or politics.

Frye also rejected some of the notions which had preoccupied Brown. With respect to Canadian culture, for example, Frye said that it was simply a cliché and untrue "that a pioneering country is interested in material rather than cultural values." 109

As mentioned above, he also noticed "a more distinctive attitude
in Canadian poetry than in Canadian life, a more withdrawn and
detached view of that life which may go back to the central fact
of Canadian history: the rejection of the American Revolution.

What seems clear from Frye's statements is that he viewed
the writing and the criticism of literature as distinct yet
interrelated disciplines with strict governing principles. A
prevailing problem with both disciplines, as Frye would describe
it, is that concerns with 'content' too often take precedence over
concerns with 'form'. Frye maintained that

Canadian poets have been urged in every generation to
search for appropriate themes, in other words to look for
content.... But the poet's quest is for form, not content...
[and] the critic is concerned only with poets. 111

It was at this point in his "Preface to an Uncollected
Anthology" that Frye added meaning to his notion that Canadians
have a problem with identity and that they attempt to identify
themselves through their literature:

I mean by form the shaping principle of the individual
poem, which is derived from the shaping principles of poetry
itself. Of these latter the most important is metaphor, and
metaphor, in its radical form, is a statement of identity:
that is that A is B. Metaphor is at its purest and most
primitive in myth, where we have immediate and total
identifications. 112

It would seem, as Frye presented it, that a critic had to be
aware of these "shaping principles of poetry" which in turn would
exert a direct influence upon the establishment of his critical
principles or standards. The critic would have to have been able to
draw clear distinctions between form and content and not allow the
content of his work to interfere with his primary critical concern
of dealing with form. While such a method would allow a critic to
do justice to a work of Canadian literature and its writer, it would not serve to separate or isolate either the critic or the literature from world literature. Rather, the subordinating of content to form would be the most democratic and unbiased way of dealing with the material. Frye explained that

we spoke at the beginning of certain principles that become important in the study of Canadian poetry. One of these is the fact that while literature may have life, reality, experience, nature or what you will for its content, the forms of literature cannot exist outside literature.... When a poet is confronted with a new life or environment, the new life may suggest a new content, but obviously cannot provide him with a new form. 113

The Canadian 'content' of poems will always differentiate the Canadian poet from poets of other countries. The poetry will always be a valuable contribution to Canadian culture because the poet is doing exactly the same thing poets in other countries are doing - working within the parameters of form. Because Frye believed the forms of literature were autonomous, he concluded that what the Canadian writer may find as new in his environment and experience, "will be new only as content: the form of his expression of it can take shape only from what he has read, not from what he has experienced."

In the final essay included in The Bush Garden, the "Conclusion to a Literary History of Canada", published in 1965, Frye talked about the need to get away from the evaluative view of criticism, insisting that "to study Canadian literature properly, one must outgrow the view that evaluation is the end of criticism, instead of its incidental by-product." Frye believed the work of the writer and of the critic were interdependent. In Frye's
view, a critic could not simply distance himself from a work of fiction and judge or evaluate it. Rather, it was his task to engage himself in the imaginative world of the writer to discover the aforementioned "structural principle" of the work and the "integral meaning presented by its metaphors, images and symbols." In this way, criticism was to be a creative enterprise, one of the goals of which was the establishment of standards for Canadian literature. "In surveying Canadian poetry and fiction," said Frye, "we feel constantly that all the energy has been absorbed in meeting a standard, a self-defeating enterprise because real standards can only be established, not met."

For Frye, the idea of criticism, or the development of real critical attitudes, was to be considered a basis for any major advancement in Canadian culture. "Culture is born in leisure and an awareness of standards," said Frye, "and pioneer conditions have disappeared." If Canadians had certain common habits and attitudes, which Canadian writers had identified, then criticism could make people more consciously aware of what these things were. Frye believed that criticism could assist Canadians in coming to terms with their problem of identity and thereby advance Canadian culture. For Frye, the development of Canadian literature and its criticism seemed the surest way to achieve these goals.

Frye's ideas on Canadian content have been overshadowed by his larger critical work (Anatomy of Criticism, Spiritus Mundi, Literature and the Bible, and many other books of criticism and theory) which has established recognition that all culture is
the product of language and previous literature and literary forms. Neither Canadian literature nor drama, whatever its content, could escape from the overarching fact that it is a product of the world empire of the English language and of the Western culture created by the Bible and writers like Dante and Shakespeare. Today, as the debates about Canadianism and continentalism recede into history, critics are much more preoccupied by the world of literary and imaginative forms and archetypes opened up by Frye. By the time Whittaker retired in 1975, the growth of the reputation of this side of Frye's criticism had sanctioned what was in reality the equivalent of this approach in Whittaker's criticism. While welcoming nationalism in Canadian drama, he always operated within the primarily invisible assumption of a larger world of standards and cultural tradition.

It is doubtful that Whittaker read the material discussed in this chapter but he spent his critical life, from the time he moved to Toronto, steering between the poles outlined by Davies, and Brown and Frye. Whittaker's continuous monitoring of international theatre and drama, and his skill and work as a theatre craftsman, gave him a knowledge of the highest international standards and enabled him to see them in relation to the developing Canadian theatre. At the same time, as a Canadian artist, he believed in artistic self-expression and was sympathetic towards the search for and expression of national identity by Canadians in theatre and drama.
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Chapter 3
Prospects for the Canadian Theatre, 1949-1959

In January, 1951, Whittaker published an article called "Our Theatre: A Youthful Bloom". In it, he compared the development of the Canadian theatre to that of Broadway. He remarked that because Broadway was only two hundred years old, "maybe Canada's crawling theatre isn't so backward after all." He then revealed that he looked around quickly, to make sure that nobody had heard me. You see, it wouldn't do for the Canadian theatre to think that it was in anything but a retarded, unhealthy state. Any more than it would be right to let the Canadian public feel otherwise than ashamed of itself for not supporting the said theatre. 2

Although he made these comments tongue-in-cheek, there was an underlying tone of concern and urgency in his suggestions. (At the end of the article he queried, "Couldn't we pull Canadian theatre out of the Promising file and put it in the Urgent basket?" )

Whittaker used the example of how Bruce Yorke and Michael Sadlier of the Peterborough-Niagara Falls summer theatres, who had made arrangements to send Canadian actors to play in Bermuda, in his argument that Canada needed to provide more opportunities for its actors to work at home. The first requisite was to build more theatres for actors to perform in. Accordingly, he discussed Charles Rittenhouse, who as Supervisor of Drama for the Montreal Protestant Board of School Commissioners, provided well-designed and well-equipped theatres in the schools built in Montreal suburbs. Whittaker then speculated that if enough theatres were built in schools, "a circuit of theatres from coast to coast" in which "Canada's travelling professional companies" of the future
could perform, might result. He was impatient for this to come about because he had already seen Gélinas "sweep Toronto off its feet just the way he swept his native Montreal, with a magnificently professional production of his own play, Tit-Coq."

Two years later, even after the highly successful first season of the Stratford Festival, Whittaker's tone was again urgent and emphatic. In an article called "Canada on Stage", he stressed that

Canada needs a popular art that it can call its own, because it will soon have things to say to itself. And these are things which no other country can say for us, or to us.

It needs playwrights to say those things, not thinly over the airwaves or briefly on screens, but richly, fully and dramatically. It needs actors and actresses to make them thrilling, designers and directors to present them with intensity and color.

All this must come now, in the time of prosperity, for the theatre needs subsidy whether from a paying audience, a generous patron or a business firm with vision if it is to become established properly.

As the Globe's reporter on the business of theatre, Whittaker not only pinpointed specific areas in the business that required immediate attention but also identified a general need for more public attention and for the theatre in Canada to become more business-like. "Because of the public attitude, the theatre attracts few people who are bent on making money or a position for themselves," he said. "Its lack of business minds has consequently been almost as big a drawback to Canadian theatre as the disinterest of the public."

In this chapter, I will examine a selection of Whittaker's reviews and articles from the period 1949-1959 in which he tells his Canadian readers that the theatre is an important and enjoyable
part of society. He tells them that because of this they should not deny themselves this pleasure and he instructs them as to how they can have more theatre in their lives. When Whittaker began writing for the Globe, the theatre could seem to him like a place of great occasions - Olivier as Oedipus, Katharine Cornell as Cleopatra on Broadway. He is therefore hard on theatrical occasions in Britain and the United States that are supposed to be splendid but fall short of expectations. He uses these as examples to say to Canadians that it is not that difficult to produce good theatre and they should therefore place faith in their artists and support their theatre at home.

On June 26, 1949, Whittaker reviewed Fortune, My Foe by Robertson Davies, the inaugural production of the Peterborough Summer Theatre. The play had been given the award for the best play of the 1948 Dominion Drama Festival. (Whittaker had seen the production but had not written about it.) He thought that

Mr. Davies has set forth one of the most intelligent and compelling single arguments I have heard in favour of Canadians staying in their own country to develop their artistic and creative talents. He also takes a few sharp Shavian cracks at our approach to art in general - saying things that need to be said to a public which needs to hear them.

As for the craftsmanship of Fortune, My Foe, Whittaker thought that although the play was not entirely lacking in emotion, the characters were "sounding boards for the playwright," and because of this it was "difficult for the actors to infuse the characters with great vitality and charm." He gave credit for originality to Martha Jamieson, the set designer, who "supplied a novel, inside-
produced in Norway, its one of the first Canadian plays to
production. He noted that as Fortune, My foot was about to be
Canadian actors, and the direction and directing of a Canadian
prest the playwriting of a Canadian, the performance of
In one of his earliest Globe reviews, then, Whittaker

used that acting area and portrayed up some dramatic stage pictures.

angled setting by Charlotte Robinson, whose design introduced some most
house Fortune, My foot was [most] acceptable housed in the well-

of these performances high and gave Mr. Davies' arguments all the
performances. He remarked that as director, "Grit held the level

but added that his "was only one of a handful of first-rate
assurance, to make us quality theatre with him and his problem"

played the role of Nicholas with strength, determination and
its best performances to date. He praised David Gardner who

production for getting "the Davies play what is probably one of
Canadians into this three-act play. He gave full credit to Grit's

fact that Davies has raised so much comment on Canada and
national play. "With that, he praised the scene work of Canada's first

productions, he praised the directed by Robert Grit at Hart House Theatre. After seeing

November, 1949, Whittaker reviewed a production of Fortune,

well as emotions. II
the theatre we need here, a theatre which is a forum for ideas as
one with do a great deal toward establishing the kind of
the larger stage. As the larger plays are involving as this

the arts in Canada, he quoted so very easily have been speaking
although Mr. Davies chooses a puppet show as his symbol of

outside setting." He concluded that

10
attract the attention of Europe" and that "Philip Hope-Wallace, 19
the British critic, called it a play of international appeal." However, Whittaker emphasized that "its importance lies more
especially in the things it has to say to Canadians." At the top
of the list of those things was the argument that Canadians should
stay in Canada and develop their artistic and creative talents
there.

In his August 6, 1949 column, Whittaker talked about "the
plight of the writer of plays at this particular time." He had
received letters from two Canadian playwrights, Arthur Stringer and
Joseph Schull, "querying us about opportunities for production." Whittaker commented that these opportunities were few and far
between. "What is the use of Canadians writing plays," he asked, if
there is no hope of production?" Singling out the summer
theatres, he stated that "although the summer theatre is
flourishing this season, it evidently does not feel sufficiently
established to risk an untried effort." He mentioned the
productions of Fortune, My Foe in this column but argued that as it
"has been easily the most-played of the recent Canadian plays (in
English, that is)," this production "was hardly a risk." He
noted, too, that a new drama by John Coulter, Riel, had been
submitted for a possible tryout at the Red Barn Theatre but made
the blunt statement in this column that "Canadian playwrights draw
a large blank in summer stock."

Whittaker's suggestion that summer theatres assist in the
development of Canadian playwriting by providing production

opportunities was a demanding proposition. However, he referred to such work being done by an organization known as the Dramatists' Guild in the United States and believed a similar effort should also be made in Canada. He said that the Dramatists' Guild was committed to finding thirty "'unestablished dramatists'" and to undertaking "a series of operations designed to provide training in their craft." Whittaker remarked that "there's no doubt that the only way a playwright can understand playwriting is by seeing other plays." Another American group was the Playwrights' Company. Whittaker pointed out that by providing opportunities for the thirty playwrights to see previews, dress rehearsals and actual performances of plays, and by sponsoring playwriting lectures and arranging "seminars with older dramatists," this company felt it could best provide for the perpetuation of its craft." He commented that by contrast, similar opportunities did not exist in Canada, and placed responsibility for providing those opportunities with Canadian drama groups. He argued that they should include new Canadian plays in their season programs:

In this way, and in this way only, it seems, can Canadian dramatists get a hearing at home. And if we have no playwrights of our own, we don't need to talk about having a Canadian theatre. 30

He could not have been more to the point and from the information he gave in his column one week later, it appeared that he had made an impression:

The pious hope expressed in this column last week that drama groups would make an attempt to stage at least one Canadian play next season brought prompt responses from Sarnia and Grimsby, asking for scripts by the playwrights we mentioned, Arthur Stringer and Joseph Schull. Now we have two
playwrights and two groups getting together. Any more takers? 31

If opinions Whittaker had expressed in his column had helped in this small way to facilitate relationships between Canadian playwrights and theatres by this early stage in his Globe career, then he was undoubtedly taking a step towards furthering the development of Canadian theatre and drama. In his August 13, 1949 column, he expressed another opinion which would become more popular in the years to follow. The Ottawa Little Theatre's production of Robertson Davies' *Eros at Breakfast* had been invited to Edinburgh to be presented for a five-day run during the Edinburgh Festival, although not as an official Festival offering, and afterwards in Glasgow. Whittaker, making an appeal for donations to help the group make the trip, hoped that touring outside of Canada would become a more frequent activity:

> Canada has made small return for the many English troupes which have come over here in the past to provide us with theatre. We like to think of it as the first of a reciprocal flow of theatre, between us and the rest of the world. 32

Whittaker's promotion of "Eros at Edinburgh" is an example of him speaking to his fellow members in the little theatre community, and fostering the interests of that community. As a critic, he was committed to following the amateur stage in Canada and when he began working at the Globe, he quickly recognized that after the Royal Alexandra and the New Play Society, Hart House Theatre at the University of Toronto was one of the most important theatres in Toronto. It had been closed from 1939 to 1945 but it had been
Canada's nearest equivalent between the world wars to the 'art theatres' of Europe and the United States - the Dublin Abbey, Copeau's Vieux Colombier, the Provincetown Playhouse. 33

When it was reopened after World War II, it was as a student theatre. Robert Gill was an American director who had studied and taught at Pittsburgh's Carnegie Institute of Technology and in 1946 he was chosen as the resident director of the theatre. He nurtured young student actors who were often quite gifted, and showed considerable skill in working through amateur theatre production problems. Whittaker thought that the kind of work done by a director with Gill's training and talent was extremely important to the development of the theatre in Canada. This is evident in his review of Crime and Punishment which Hart House presented in October, 1949, before, their production of Fortune, My Foe.

Whittaker noted that Rodney Ackland's adaptation of the novel "has attempted to crowd in as much of the Dostoyevsky material as possible." 34 He was pointing out that Ackland put on stage all the rooms of Dostoyevsky's Petersburg tenement, which presented a challenge for both the director and designer. He believed, however, that Margaret McDonough's "multi-celled setting was most effectively executed" and said that Gill was "equally capable of solving the other staging problems of the play." 35 Whittaker commended Gill for the way in which he brought the large cast "into a swift succession of fascinating groupings." 36 He believed that to get the actors into these groupings without overshadowing the characters who "have important contributions to the development
of the plot - that is the achievement of the artist." He thought that in Gill, Hart House was "fortunate to have...such a stage artist."

Whittaker acknowledged that the unskilled amateur actors had a tendency to 'over-act' and even 'screech' in their enthusiasm but he used critical sleight of hand to commend Gill for achieving a unity of acting style:

Because [Gill] is working with what you might call raw talent, he can mould them into a unity of performance. In this respect, the Gill production was more successful than the one Komisarjevsky staged for John Gielgud in New York last year. The question of international standards comes into play here. It is evident that the unity of acting style achieved by Gill was a simplified, melodramatic, rather coarse one. However, while these young actors were not star performers, their production of Crime and Punishment was much more even and integrated than the New York production. The production in New York was hopelessly unIntegrated because a number of the actors had different, incompatible acting styles. Whittaker's eye for acting talent is revealed in this review. He comments on the young Kate Reid, saying that while "admittedly over-taxed by the role of Katerina," she "still gives a performance of brilliance in combining the pride of birth, the contempt, the fury, the pathos," Whittaker was genuinely impressed by Gill's work and recognized that he was a director who would capably teach young actors their craft, and work to achieve the highest production standards possible in the amateur theatre.

On November 21, 1949, Whittaker's 'Showbusiness' column was
comprised entirely of his review of Harry Boyle's *The Inheritance* which was being staged by the New Play Society. This play singles out an excellent example of a particular process in the development of form in English-language Canadian playwriting, as Whittaker saw it, at that time. He pointed out that *The Inheritance* had "a common derivation" with Mavor Moore's *Who's Who*. By this, he meant that both playwrights had learned their craft writing plays for radio before writing these for the stage. Whittaker emphasized the importance of the tradition of radio drama in the country to the growth of Canadian drama for the stage:

> Because the radio is providing Canadian playwrights with their best commercial opportunities, its influence on the approach and form of our native drama is bound to be a most important factor. 42

He believed that radio drama had developed an "impressionistic technique...as its own after the stage had moved away from it." He explained how this was evident in the structure of *The Inheritance*, with the action being "built through a series of short, separate scenes." He thought, however, that this form was problematic on the stage:

> In radio, where the sustained drama is difficult, this is excellent practice. For the stage, it leaves something to be desired, for each break tends to break the narrative suspense. 45

Whittaker identified the conflict in the play as "between the younger and older generations in a Canadian farming family." The patriarch, a Scotsman who believes the family should stay together, clashes with his son and his son's wife over the matter of independence. Because of problems with form, though, Whittaker
thought that the dramatic conflict came late in the play "and is
never fully explored, perhaps, but when it does come, we feel it
deeply." It is clear that Whittaker liked this kind of domestic
drama and the approach taken in staging it by the New Play Society.
He stressed the importance of a good working relationship between
a playwright and theatre practitioners, saying that Boyle wrote the
play "faithfully and lovingly" and that "the New Play Society set
these people on the stage with the same love and faith." The
cast, consisting of Frank Peddie, Margot Christie, Toby Robbin, Don
Harron, Tom Paton, and directed by Robert Christie, provided
"acting of the same satisfactory calibre as in the group's previous
offerings," as Whittaker saw it. He concluded this review with
the following pronouncement and appraisal:

Accept the fact that our Canadian plays are going to
resemble radio dramas as often as they do stage plays, and
you will find this latest example true, honest and well-
written entertainment which knows its theme well and sets it
down well. 50

By the end of the first calendar year that Whittaker had been
working for the Globe, he had initiated the discussion which was to
endure throughout his career as a daily working critic for that
paper. He had shown his readers some of the directions that
discussion was to take and some of the obstacles that had to be
faced by a developing Canadian theatre.

It was one thing to believe that Canada had in *Fortune, My Foe*
its first national play but, as he had stated, Whittaker believed
that there was little use in Canadians writing plays if there was
no hope of having them produced. When Joseph Schull wrote to
Whittaker, he thought of the Royal Alexandra as a theatre which might produce his play. "He was inquiring if the Royal Alexandra here would be likely to produce it," said Whittaker, "just as Morley Callaghan's play was done earlier this season." Although the Royal Alexandra did not mount Schull's play, his inquiry was reasonable given that it did take in what had been a New Play Society production that had run for a number of successful weeks in the small Museum Theatre. The Royal Alexandra was the leading professional theatre in Toronto and while it featured primarily British and American plays, musicals and stars, its manager, Ernest Rawley was receptive to Canadian material. While touring productions of Brigadoon and Oklahoma! were advertised as upcoming at the theatre, it was the New Play Society's musical revue, Spring Thaw '49! which was playing at the Royal Alexandra during Whittaker's first days at the Globe.

Even four years later, though, in a book review of Renown at Stratford, Whittaker summed up the state of affairs of Canadian dramatic literature by pointing out that

the theatrical literature of Canada occupies a very small shelf in any library. The comparatively few plays published make up the bulk of it and are augmented by only a few historical surveys of early pioneeing work along this line. 52

Whittaker was correct about the small number of plays published but mistaken about the historical surveys at the time. The Canadian theatre would have to develop, not only to accommodate new plays, but to encourage the development of playwriting. Because the Royal Alexandra was a touring house and had no wardrobe or scenery shops of its own, it could not mount a play of any kind. The most it
could do was house plays produced by other people. With a shelf of plays as small as Canada's, this was not about to take place often, at least for the time being, and it would be the work of other theatres to find the plays and put them on stage.

The only professional group in Toronto at the time staging Canadian plays was the New Play Society. Dora Mavor Moore's Village Players, along with a number of CBC radio actors, formed the New Play Society in 1946. Society members rented the Museum Theatre to stage their plays and constituted a professional company in that they agreed to pay themselves any profits from their productions. In January, 1950, Whittaker saw their production of Andrew Allan's *Narrow Passage*. He commended Allan for his understanding of differences between radio drama and drama written for the stage:

> His drama is expressed in theatrical terms, without recourse to the impressionism that seems the hallmark of radio-inspired drama. His play has a logical division into acts, and a development proper to that structure. But Mr. Allan still has something to learn of the stage's necessary economy of ideas. 53

Whittaker stated in his review that he could not determine what the theme and the central conflict of the play were. He noticed, however, that at one point in the play, "the popular provincial theme of the stifling effects of small Ontario [sic] holds the floor." He also commented that there was a shared problem with character development in the play text and in the portrayal of character in the production but was even-handed in his judgement of this. With characteristic diplomacy, he said he found it hard to draw the line between Mr. Allan's failure to achieve an understandable character and Miss Brown's failure in presenting it. We tend rather to believe that the fault is
Whittaker declared in this review that Allan, because of his 'brilliant' work in radio drama with the CBC, was "the most important figure in the field of Canadian drama." He added, however, that he achieved this status without having made any contribution "to what is still termed, even in this country, the legitimate theatre." Allan's inexperience with form for a stage play was apparent. The playwright also did the staging for this production of Narrow Passage and Whittaker, undoubtedly believing Allan could have benefitted from the assistance of a designer, thought the staging had much to do with the development of the play being "marked by indefiniteness." While radio dramatists like Allan could make a valuable contribution to the development of Canadian drama written for the stage, differences between the two forms, especially in production, were apparent. It was clear that people from radio needed to learn to write for the stage.

In the ten seasons that it was in operation, the New Play Society produced seventy-two plays. Forty-seven of these were original Canadian works. One of their more celebrated productions of an original Canadian play was their February, 1950, production of John Coulter's Riel. The recipient of awards for The House in the Quiet Glen and The Drums Are Out at the Dominion Drama Festival, Coulter was already an accomplished playwright when he wrote Riel. Nonetheless, given the epic scope of the play and its structure of fifteen scenes with more than thirty characters, Whittaker remarked that "it was an immense task, not only for Mr. 
Coulter in the writing, but for the New Play Society in the staging of what he has written."

As with Narrow Passage, Whittaker noticed deficiencies in the plot development of the play. "The first act lacks something of a climax," he said. "It is not enough, we feel, to have Riel grab his rifle and whip off the stage." He also remarked that in the courtroom scenes, "the individual witnesses are well characterized but the issues are not bold and suspense is not overpowering." He also found the trial scene "lacking in cumulative emotion," and concluded that this might be a problem in the playwriting. Despite these weaknesses in the script, however, Whittaker thought that the play was essentially well crafted and pronounced it "worthy of the stage" on the basis of "sharply explicit characterizations, the unfailing humour, the economy of historical exposition, and the swiftness and color of the action."

Because of his own experience as a director and designer in small theatres, Whittaker knew how challenging it was to stage a play with thirty characters on a stage as small as the one in the Museum Theatre. He therefore emphasized the value of the working relationship between the playwright and the director, illustrating his knowledge of different kinds of staging in the process:

Mr. Coulter has written his drama very sensibly for a partially Elizabethan, partially expressionistic stage, bare of all but the essentials of furniture, with only the aid of lighting, costumes and grouping to supply atmosphere.... Under Donald Harron's direction - as a director he earns the title - the action moves with spirit, and proper advantage is taken of the sparse opportunities of the Museum stage.
In his reviews of productions of Canadian plays, Whittaker always considered the relationships between playwrights and theatre practitioners as he attempted to deal with the craftsmanship involved.

In March, 1950, Whittaker announced in his column that "Toronto is living up to its name as Canada's No. 1 Theatre Town." This statement was based on the number of productions being given in the city at that time, including first performances of new Canadian plays. On the evening of March 10, The Drums Are Out by John Coulter was opening at the Arts and Letters Club. Robertson Davies' King Phoenix was being performed by the North Toronto Theatre Guild at Northern Vocational School. "Both are to be Drama Festival entries," Whittaker pointed out. In addition to this, a production of King Lear was being staged by the New Play Society. The New Play Society's contribution to the development of Canadian theatre and drama was remarkable. Most importantly, from Whittaker's point of view, they were staging Canadian plays and he commented on this in late March, 1950, in his review of their production of Morley Callaghan's Going Home. "This is a notable service the New Play Society is contributing," he said, "a chance for our playwrights to judge their work as a play can only be judged - on the stage."

In the same way that textual weaknesses in Riel were made apparent through production, a major flaw in the plot development of Going Home was exposed in the production at the Museum Theatre. The issue of insanity, which was introduced by Callaghan but never
properly explained, made the resolution of the play confusing.

Whittaker believed that

if it ever reaches Broadway, Going Home will owe a tremendous
debt to the New Play Society, who provided what turned out to
be a laboratory performance on opening night. After seeing
that first impression, Mr. Callaghan was able to put his
finger on one of the weaknesses of his play, a point only
visible on examination under the strong light of the stage.
Whereupon Mr. Callaghan went promptly to work and corrected
that flaw, at the same time clarifying the play's major issue
immensely.

There seemed little doubt at the time that productions of the
kind done by the New Play Society, from which playwrights could
learn by working with a company, were essential if Canadian
playwrights were going to develop. When promoting Spring Thaw in
April, 1950, Whittaker said that

no organization in the country knows more about the Original
Canadian Play than the New Play Society, with its record of
five done this year, and its free-hand comments on the subject
should prove instructive as well as amusing.

Given the number of productions of Canadian plays in Toronto,
Whittaker was understandably eager to promote Canadian drama both
at home and abroad in the early 1950s. The touring of more
outstanding productions was one way to attempt this. He had already
suggested that a production of Fortune, My Foe be sent across the
country and was elated when Eros at Breakfast had been invited to
the Edinburgh Festival. In April, 1950, he described the opening of
the revue There Goes Yesterday at the Royal Alexandra as "the
climax of a venture of special interest in our native theatre."
There Goes Yesterday was an original Canadian revue which had
just been toured across the country. The performers were composed
of actors from Muskoka's Strawhat Theatre Co. and from Hart House
Theatre. Whittaker cited Robert Gill as "an important influence in the group's development." He believed that, in one sense, the tour was a triumph and he emphasized that

this revue, which arrives here for a week after a season's tour of the country, is one of the things we Canadians can point to with pride when we start thrashing around trying to prove that the theatre is possible, natural and even necessary in our national life. 73

On the other hand, though, the tour of this revue made certain deficiencies in Canadian theatre buildings and audiences all too apparent and Whittaker added that

it would be exaggerating to say that the tour was a completely triumphant one, for that would suggest proper theatres and well-trained audiences are ready to be found all across this Dominion, which is not yet so. But it was successful in showing it could be done. 74

It was in a spirit of optimism and approval that Whittaker reported the merging of the Strawhat Players with the New Play Society for the 1950-51 season, saying that this would be "another step in giving Toronto audiences a first-class resident theatre and Canadians a permanent native theatre of which they may be proud." Whittaker also approved of Donald Harron going to England in the spring of 1950. Harron had distinguished himself as an actor, director and writer, primarily with the New Play Society, by this time. From Whittaker's perspective at this point in his career, if a permanent Canadian theatre was going to develop, it was going to need skilled, talented practitioners like Harron, who also had foreign training. "For him to see and study the best of theatre in England," said Whittaker, "should prove extremely valuable to him in the future. And to us." 76
In late November, 1950, Whittaker travelled to New York and saw a Broadway production of Christopher Fry's *The Lady's Not For Burning*. It is evident from his review of the play that the events of the past year in Toronto were on his mind. As if to reinforce his statement in his review of *Going Home* that a play can only be properly judged on the stage, he stressed that

Christopher Fry's special quality as a poet is easily enough recognized from the printed page, and has been given due recognition. But as a dramatist, his excellence can only be guessed in the book stage of our appreciation. Whittaker spoke of "Fry's contrariness as a playwright" in this review, but the production, "superbly cast" and given "cunning direction" by John Gielgud, appealed to the critic's aesthetic taste. "It is a most beautiful production," said Whittaker, "of a really brilliant verse play."

Whittaker saw Gielgud's work as providing one of the highest theatrical standards possible and he believed he was capable of taking on some of the more difficult challenges of the modern theatre. "Mr. Gielgud's ever-growing skill as a director - which must match his long-established ability as an actor," he commented, "by now proves equal to the task of putting Fry into stage form." He was perhaps most impressed by the acting in *The Lady's Not For Burning* and his enthusiasm was evident. He said of Pamela Brown in the starring role:

She is all the things this lady must be - elusive, warm, witty and spiritual, and all of the time possessed by a strange beauty.

She and Mr. Gielgud head a cast of those wonderful English actors who can thread their way immaculately through a field of flowering verse and emerge quite real and not the least breathless at the other side.
Whittaker's criticism in the early 1950s shows that he thought Canada had already produced and was continuing to produce fine actors but this review of *The Lady's Not For Burning* indicates that he thought Canadian actors and directors could still learn a great deal from foreign models. He believed, too, that the playwright could not help but benefit from a production of such high quality. He pointed out that the script was enhanced and helped, where it needed help, by the actors and director:

> The dramatic line is sustained where Fry has let it go slack in the pursuit of a cascade of glittering words. The characters, whom he forsakes on that quest, are kept breathing and alive until he returns. 82

Whittaker's ability to differentiate between the merits of a play text, and a performance of that text, was evident.

As early as July, 1950, Whittaker made a prediction about Gratien Gélinas and *Tit-Coq*, which had been produced very successfully in Montreal and quite successfully in Toronto:

> The Broadway producer with whom he eventually signs will have to deal with a man who knows his theatre and knows what he wants in his theatre.... *Tit'-Coq* is likely to be the first all-Canadian production of an all-Canadian play to arrive on Broadway. 83

Indeed, in February of 1951, *Tit-Coq* became that, but the production was forced to close after only three performances because of poor reviews. *Tit-Coq'*s appearance on Broadway, however, 84 raised what Whittaker called "an international controversy." He said in this review that Gélinas gave his play "a magnificently 85 expert production." It is evident from his original review of the play, when it opened in January, 1951, at the Royal Alexandra, that in terms of theatre aesthetics, he thought *Tit-Coq* made an
an impression on the audience opposite to that of a play like The Lady's Not For Burning:

What the distinguished first-night audience saw was a strong, almost ugly drama, wrenched out of the native soil of Quebec by a man who understands his people well. Its language, spoken with the crude, picturesque accents of the Québécois by a cast of French actors, is not pretty, but it suits exactly the tale of the people it speaks about. 86

From his commentary on Gélinas' playwriting, it is evident that Whittaker considered him the most accomplished Canadian dramatist to date. "This forthright drama," he said, "has been set down with immense craftsmanship by Mr. Gélinas, the brilliant revue artist and actor turned playwright." 87

The Broadway critics, however, did not see the play in this light. Whittaker quoted Brooks Atkinson who said in The New York Times that the ending of the play was

founded on what I believe to be a false trick of craftmanship, and so Ti'-Coq is no longer a portrayal of life but artful playwriting, which is another and inferior thing. 88

Atkinson was referring to Marie-Ange's decision to marry Leopold Vermette, the man her parents wanted her to marry, instead of Tit-Coq, whom she loved. Whittaker rose to Gélinas' defence, however, saying, "I personally would have mistrusted any expressive missive purporting to come from Marie-Ange," whereas he knew that Atkinson believed this character "would never have jilted Tit-Coq." Whittaker stated somewhat impatiently:

Just as another N.Y. critic, Woolcott Gibbs, evidently, went expecting a modern-day version of Chanticleer, full of barnyard quaintness, so Mr. Atkinson seems to have expected a folk idyll. 90

What is clear is that the American critics rejected the ethos
of Tit-Coq and Whittaker rejected the judgement of those critics because of that. Whittaker supported Gélinas who was not prepared to put commercial interests ahead of his artistic integrity and Whittaker quoted him: "It would have been artistically dishonest of me to change the ending for the sake of finding a new and lucrative market." Tit-Coq's appearance on Broadway brought to the surface a remarkable difference in dramatic sensibility and taste between theatre audiences in the two countries. It was apparent that at that time Canadian drama was not easily transferred to the American stage. This prompted Whittaker to state that because of the collapse of the Tit-Coq production, it was more important than ever that Canada develop "independence in theatrical matters."

In his columns in the Globe in 1951, Whittaker made numerous statements to the effect that Toronto had taken over from Montreal as the theatrical capital of the country. He said, for example, that

this city's claim to the best theatre public in the country is not hard to substantiate. Toronto is the only city remaining in the Dominion which supports a regular season of professional drama as well as numerous efforts less professional and less regular. 93

Toronto theatregoers were offered Shakespearean drama every summer by the Earle Grey Players who performed in the quadrangle at Trinity College at the University of Toronto. In addition, Sterndale Bennett was operating a theatre school in the city and Whittaker gave updates on what he believed was the excellent work being done there.

Whittaker's frequent trips to New York often enabled him to
see the first production of an American play on Broadway and then to see it again in a touring production at the Royal Alexandra. This gave him a rare perspective on audiences in the two countries. *Death of a Salesman*, which opened the Royal Alexandra's 1951-52 season was an important case in point. Where *Tit-Coq* had failed on Broadway, Whittaker was giving notice of the play's one hundredth performance at the Royal Alexandra in the spring of 1951. He said that "there is no doubt that Gratien Gélinas is the man of the year in Canadian Theatre and Tit-Coq is the play that has made the biggest impression in our national theatre to date." Similarly, he referred to *Death of a Salesman* as "one of the most deeply impressive dramas to appear on the American stage in two decades." Jo Mielziner's setting had been scaled down touring production but Whittaker believed it still stood "as an expressive and useful framework of light and shadow." He thought that Miller had done "one of the most skillful and intricate jobs of playwriting of our generation," and he talked about what he called the impressionistic elements of the play:

Mr. Miller, although his play has the tailoring of a young Ibsen, employs the impressionistic methods of the modern stage. The light flickers, and we are in the past, an idea flickers and we understand the sickness of a whole life.  

The tone of this review suggests a degree of reservation on Whittaker's part with respect to these methods. He credited Miller with giving his audience "a tragedy with a searchlight attached," and the company performing at the Royal Alexandra with keeping "that searchlight burning brightly." However, this production did not seem to allow him the same emotional involvement that he
had experienced with plays like *The Lady's Not For Burning* and, indeed, *Tit-Coq*. Much of this had to do with the fact that, as Whittaker put it, in transforming "that familiar figure, the American travelling salesman, from a low figure of fun into one of great tragic implication," *Death of a Salesman* ran counter to "the traditional definition" of tragedy. He thought that the form Miller had used was inappropriate for the content of the play. Whittaker clearly had the same problem accepting the plight of Willy Loman as dramatically truthful that Atkinson had accepting *Tit-Coq* as a truthful portrayal of life. In this case, it was Whittaker who could not accept *Death of a Salesman's* claims for itself. He believed that Willy simply had "no greatness within himself to make his fall great." Without actually saying that he rejected this as a way for Canadian dramatists to write plays, Whittaker made it clear that this was not a foreign model for new Canadian drama. "Perhaps we should make the qualification that *Death of a Salesman* is an American tragedy," he said, "and leave it at that."

Earlier in the year, Whittaker had talked about his response to what he termed "the new American impressionism" in a review of Carson McCullers' *The Member of the Wedding*, which he had seen in New York and Toronto. (When using the term 'impressionism', Whittaker was technically referring to Expressionism, in which characters express their inner thoughts poetically. He cannot be singled out for blame, however, as only art critics used the terms systematically at that time.) He believed that this style
could be traced back to Chekhov and that "hard-hitting Arthur Miller used it for good effect in Death of a Salesman." He thought that drama of this type was intense, with the mood generally being one of sustained tension to the point of being irritating, but fascinating as well. He believed that although one could never be sure if there was any "great meaning" to be discovered, the introspective moods of plays written in that style could be engrossing, so much so that "the intrusion of such old-time theatrical standbys as death, violence and the chase" could be resented:

In the old-time romantic drama poets were called in to speak like poets; now the postman talks his dreams aloud and sideways, and so does the adolescent girl, the old cook, the shoe salesman and even the 7-year-old boys. Although Whittaker did his best to come to terms with this dramatic style, it was clearly not to his taste. He could appreciate some of its merits in the better-crafted and more accessible plays like Death of a Salesman but in more problematic texts and productions he found it 'unsatisfying'. In the concluding paragraph of his review of The Member of the Wedding, he said that he found the production in New York deeply moving, but was unmoved by the Toronto production (which had the same cast). He speculated as to why this was:

Perhaps the Canadian audience (recently discovered to have its own identity) is less receptive to this impressionism from over the border. Perhaps this playgoer, on his home ground and part of it, was less open to the suggestion of the play. It certainly provided a puzzling evening in the theatre.

Whittaker thought that Expressionism had its place in the
modern theatre but it was not as appropriate a form of theatrical expression for the Canadian sensibility as more traditional forms. He seemed to sense this more keenly in theatres at home. This could have been an indication of the Canadian identity which he thought was evident in theatre audiences. He was sensing that Canadians, in the early 1950s, subscribed to community values, whereas Americans were interested in individual expression in the theatre. For example, Tit-Coq ends with Marie-Ange obeying the dictates of her society and with Tit-Coq being made to accept this, and thereby conform to the dictates of what it means to be a good citizen in Quebec society. On the other hand, Death of a Salesman and Member of the Wedding offer a different, more internal view of character – of individuals living in their heads more than in social situations, who reject the public world for the fantasies in their minds. Whittaker clearly preferred the Canadian submission to the enter world of society in Tit-Coq to the clamorous subjectivity of the American plays.

On the first of October, 1951, another professional theatre, the Jupiter Theatre, opened in Toronto. It planned to stage its productions in the Museum Theatre as the New Play Society's successor in that facility. It was John Drainie who articulated the policy of the theatre and Whittaker quoted him at length in his column:

   Its first aim was to provide an outlet for Canadian plays, but it was found later that the Canadian plays available were below the standard Jupiter felt it was necessary to maintain.... Jupiter theatre doesn't intend to produce plays just because they are by Canadians. Every play, Canadian or foreign, must meet a certain high standard, and we
try to judge every play on the same basis. In this way we are able to place our productions of Canadian plays alongside the finest from any other country without apology.... We feel that's the only way Canadian playwriting will reach a level comparable with the world's best - and we're confident that if the writers know their plays will be well produced, that day isn't too far away. 111

The policy of the Jupiter Theatre to produce only plays that met high international standards was consistent with Davies' idea of what the Canadian theatre should be. Both Drainie and Whittaker knew that if this policy was to be fulfilled, the Jupiter Theatre would have to be completely professional and that was the intention of the new company.

Whittaker knew who the world's best were and spent time in their company whenever he could. The personal enthusiasm evident in his reviews in the Globe undoubtedly inspired theatre practitioners in Canada. On December 25, 1951, his column opened with the following statement:

Surely a drama critic can't ask for more of a Christmas treat than the chance to review a production like the Caesar and Cleopatra which Sir Laurence Olivier and Vivien Leigh have now brought to Broadway to create the same kind of excitement it earlier raised in London. 112

This review contains one of the most telling early indications that Whittaker's critical orientation was largely impressionistic in nature and that he often measured the quality of a production by the depth of the impression made upon him. He had seen the Oliviers' production of Antony and Cleopatra in London that summer and thought that although it was clear that Shaw's play did not have the greatness of Shakespeare's, the Oliviers' Caesar and Cleopatra made "a deeper impression." 113 In an effort to define
the standard by which he was judging this work, Whittaker said that "when one compares - or even criticizes - these two productions one is conscious of doing so on a high level of appreciation."

Whittaker's analyses of the performances of Olivier and Leigh revealed what he thought great actors could achieve:

Both performances, so happily matched in detail, in contrasts of shade and tone, seem to go - as those of great actors and actresses must - beyond the playwright's invention into a world where interpretation itself becomes a creation. 115

He argued that Olivier created

a characterization compounded of the best parts of his great Oedipus and superb Justice Shallow. It is an amazing likeness, so that one is convinced that we will not look upon such a Caesar again in our lifetime. 116

Whittaker speculated that "the Oliviers [were] presenting theatre which [was] probably the wonder of two continents." 117

In addition to a tremendous buildup of excitement over the prospect of a theatre festival in Stratford, Ontario, Whittaker's columns of 1952 were characterized by attempts to define Canada's national theatrical and dramatic identity and this interest was also reflected in his reviews. The Jupiter Theatre was about to stage Dalton Trumbo's comedy, The Meanest Thief in Town. It was playing with moderate success in London (with Canadian Bernard Braden as its star) but was a flop on Broadway. This provided Whittaker with an ideal opportunity to pose the question: "What kind of plays do Canadian audiences like?" 118 He pointed out that it was "a well-known axiom of the theatre" that plays that had long runs in London were unsuccessful on Broadway and vice versa. He defined Canadian playgoers as having a "firm grasp on American
ways and customs." He believed that at the same time, there was a strong tie in tastes between the British and Canadian audience, certainly the Toronto segment of it." Whittaker thought that the response of Canadian playgoers to a production like the Jupiter Theatre's The Meanest Thief in Town could help them learn more about what they liked in the theatre:

Once we have all found out a little more about it, it should be easier for us, as Canadian playgoers, to chart our own course - separate and distinct from that of the Broadway or the West End theatres, though inevitably having much in common with each. 122

In February, 1952, the Jupiter Theatre staged Socrates by Canadian playwright Lister Sinclair and Whittaker thought that this was "by far and away the greatest achievement of the new theatrical enterprise." He called Sinclair's play "notable, if not notably dramatic," for its depiction of the arrest, trial and death of Socrates and he attempted to show Sinclair how, as a playwright, he could learn from a fine actor. Frank Peddie, whom Whittaker had already seen in a number of roles, played Socrates, and Whittaker concluded that his depiction of the character was a greater achievement than the play itself:

It is, then, Mr. Peddie's gift as an actor which crowns the evening and as playwright, Mr. Sinclair will doubtless accept the fact that this is as it should be. 125

Given his remarks about the Oliviers' production of Caesar and Cleopatra, Whittaker undoubtedly thought that if Sinclair truly understood the art of playwriting, the character and personality of Socrates would count for more on the stage than his ideas.

Whittaker took a similar approach - gauging the skill of the
actors against the quality and demands of the play text - in his criticism of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Crime of Passion*, the final production of the Jupiter Theatre's first season. He summarized Sartre's concern in the play as being "the need of action, good or bad, in our life." It seemed surprising to Whittaker that "the propounder of existentialism" was such a skilled playwright and he called him "a master of dramatic action." At the same time, he believed that Sartre's writing required "tremendous skill on the part of the director and the cast," and in this respect the full weight of Sartre's thought fell on the shoulders of Don Harron, who played Hugo. Whittaker was once again impressed by Harron's skill:

No actor less intelligent than Mr. Harron could convince us that the analysis of action rather than action is the most important part of the play. And to match his intelligence, Mr. Harron has any amount of emotion at his command.

A dramatist like Sinclair could learn about dramatic action from a play like *Crime of Passion*. This was another example of the way in which Whittaker recognized that a Canadian actor was capable of mastering difficult roles, not only in Canadian but also in foreign plays. At that time, there were Canadian actors who were capable of meeting international standards but Canadian playwriting generally fell below those standards.

In late October, 1952, Whittaker visited His Majesty's Theatre in Montreal to see the North American debut of the Compagnie Madeleine-Renaud - Jean-Louis Barrault. He attributed any and all stylistic curiosities in their production of André Gide's translation of *Hamlet* to "the convention...of the French classic
However, he found this to be "a production that was almost flawless in its conception." He quoted Barrault as saying that mime and diction are the two sides of any actor's art, and the visual and auditory sensations must crystallize into a unity for the actor as well as the audience.

As was the case with productions which made a deep and favourable impression on him, Whittaker used the word 'beauty' to describe this one and remarked that it has been a Hamlet completely strange, in all its familiarity. It cannot be judged in the light of our previous conceptions, for it rises out of another theatre, with other traditions.

Their work gave him an entirely new perspective on an English play and of the final scene, which depicted Fortinbras and his men, he commented: "Here is the traditional tableau of the French theatre, a glory to send us home inspired." Whittaker could not help but be inspired by such skilled theatre artists and by work which so clearly came out of a national tradition and style such as he wished for Canada.

Two weeks later, Whittaker reviewed Ted Allan's new work, The Moneymakers, at the Museum Theatre. It was the second original play sponsored by the Jupiter Theatre. The story of a Toronto writer who goes to Hollywood, the play had nationalistic overtones. "There is some danger of Allan's hero becoming smug about his nationalism," said Whittaker, "but most of us will lap it up." Whittaker believed, however, that the main theme of the play was "not local but universal," echoing "the theatre's old concern about a man's soul and the sale thereof." He remarked that the play "even has
a Mephistopheles in the old, romantic tradition - humorous, outrageous and attractive."

While Whittaker found fault with the craftsmanship of The Moneymakers, especially in "the overpiling of emphasis at the end," his comments show that he thought there was a glimmer of a national style in the play, as Allan had blended nationalistic elements with a universal theme. Again, it was good acting that brought this to light. Kate Reid starred in The Moneymakers and it was evident that she had progressed since Whittaker had reviewed her in Crime and Punishment at Hart House Theatre. Whittaker praised her for her performance, saying she "brought the color of life to the stage." This review also revealed that Whittaker thought a director was "of prime importance in the cutting, shaping and clarification of a script." With respect to this particular production, he said that

the more conventional aspects of his job - characterization, pace, timing, movement - will be better appreciated at the beginning of the week... But there was already atmosphere, contrast and a variety of pace peeping through.

"We hate to keep harping on the subject of national theatre and its value in a country's relationship with the rest of the world," was Whittaker's introduction to his column in late November, 1952, "but this seems a very good time for Canada to be thinking in terms of national representation abroad." The events of 1952, particularly the visit of the Barrault-Renaud Company from France and an invitation from Greece for our "National Theatre" to participate in a festival there, on which Whittaker could only comment that there was no mail address for our national theatre.
(clearly, there was still no such entity in Canada), prompted him to return once again to this question. Whittaker believed that the theatre "must still primarily be to enrich our lives at home, and develop our own talent at home." He emphasized, however, that as it was an age of "reciprocal culture," and as Canada was becoming a wealthy and important country, it was time to redeem itself in the eyes of the world," as it had not done its part to date. "The practical use of theatre as good-will promotion," he said, "is likely to become more and more necessary."

Whittaker disclosed the disappointment he had felt when, in 1949, he had discovered that the Ottawa Little Theatre's production of Davies' Eros at Breakfast had only been invited "as a side dish of the international festival, and not on the main course of events." He speculated that if another invitation came from Edinburgh, the most recent winner of the Dominion Drama Festival would be a logical choice. He pointed out, though, that "recent festivals haven't always attained top standard theatre." It was to the theatres which had produced work of the highest standard to date that he looked to fill this gap:

Perhaps some special effort of the Canadian Repertory, the New Play Society, the Totem or the Jupiter theatres might pass muster on the international scene. Or maybe the forthcoming Stratford Festival will provide our best work with the assistance of Tyrone Guthrie and Alec Guinness. While it was clear from Whittaker's reviews that significant progress had been made in the areas of playwriting, acting, directing and design in Canadian theatre and drama, with standards at the Dominion Festival lagging, it was a handful of professional
theatres in the country that were setting the highest standards.

Although the Stratford Festival dominated the theatre news of 1953, Whittaker did not overlook the many stops on his beat. In January, he saw the first New York production of Arthur Miller's *The Crucible*. As with Sartre's *Crime of Passion* ("It was a very full evening we spent with the Communists at the Museum Theatre.") he was quite comfortable with political drama and had no difficulty coming to terms with it in his review. It was his knowledge of theatrical conventions which served him well in this respect. He believed that the topicality of the subject matter made the play's impact all the more powerful:

> Mr. Miller has not only found a theme which cries out for the kind of public examination which only a theatre can give, but he has found one about which the public is already feeling nervous and guilty. 153

Whittaker was not only impressed by the plot and staging of the play but also found it aesthetically pleasing and called it "powerful stuff, beautifully built." He felt that by setting his play in the past, Miller forced "a false perspective on his audience." However, Whittaker observed that the audience members were never allowed to disassociate themselves from the characters. This was primarily a function of what he described as "a form of archaic speech" used by Miller which both created a suitable atmosphere and spoke "directly to modern ears."

Whittaker knew the powerful part the theatre could play in the politics of the day and in the case of *The Crucible* did not deny it this function. He concluded that in terms of political relevance, Miller's "examination of present day hysteria is as valuable a
contribution as the stage can make today." Mindful of Canadian audiences, he remarked that *The Crucible*, "if presented in Canada soon enough, may help avoid similar extravagances of zeal." He concluded his review by saying that this play represented the American theatre "at its most eloquent." Comparing it to *Death of a Salesman*, he believed this to be a "less tricky" play but one which struck audiences "just as deeply," using language that was "often far superior." Whittaker illustrated in this review that he recognized Miller's mastery of different forms of expression. He suggested that Canadian dramatists would do well if they developed a similar mastery of form. "Obviously, the man who can write both [plays]," he said, "is to be upheld by any country which respects playwrights."

In mid-February, 1953, Whittaker reviewed *Blue is For Mourning* by Nathan Cohen done by the Jupiter Theatre Company at the Museum Theatre. "It is a courageous critic who writes a play," said Whittaker, "but nobody has ever accused Nathan Cohen of lacking courage." The main achievement of the play, he felt was Cohen's depiction of local colour in his "study of Cape Breton life, hung around the climactic days of a strike." Whittaker found the play as a whole difficult to accept as a dramatic entity, though, and he astutely pinpointed the shifting emphasis on the relative importance of characters and the cluttering of the plot line with such "odd devices" as the flooding of the cellar and the neighbour's fortune-telling, as significant structural flaws. He laid part of the blame for this on Jerome Mayer, saying that "the
director of a brand new play can be a most helpful collaborator, slicing off a bit of extraneous argument at one point, cutting out a cliché at another," but he did not feel Mayer had done enough in this respect. (Cohen himself was unhappy about the production of his play.) Whittaker found the dialogue 'utilitarian' for the most part but gave praise to the playwright where it was due:

The play is at its best when snuffling out a bit of warm humor here, and a little snatch of folklore there, and in these instances Mr. Cohen writes with real warmth. 171

In Whittaker's review of July 14, 1953, he described the opening night of the first Stratford Festival as "the most exciting night in the history of the Canadian theatre" and analyzed the events of that evening. In his review of the next evening's performance of All's Well That Ends Well, he analyzed Mr. Guthrie's gift of discovery and a kind of magic that turns this play into a delight more rare than that of Richard III." Three days later, Whittaker admitted in his column that "opening night excitement had taken its toll of actors as well as reviewers," and he allowed that "there was still room for improvement" at Stratford. The quality of the productions had exposed more clearly than ever before to Whittaker the strengths and weaknesses of Canadian actors. He said of them in their roles in Richard III:

And at least five of the Canadian actors have yet to master the medium, to discover the truth behind their characterizations when the exterior demands have become easier for them. 176

He believed, however, that the Canadian actors, "better suited" to their roles in All's Well That Ends Well, gave performances
that were "more closely successful and original" in that play.

Whittaker thought that while the production of Richard III "fully lived up to the demands of the occasion," something unique in world theatrical history had been achieved with the second production, which he said "seems to us to establish the true rank and value of the Stratford Festival." In his estimation, Guthrie had created "an elegant theatre piece, alternating between high-styled romantic interludes and rich low-comedy passages." He speculated that Guthrie's work, coupled with Tanya Moiseiwitsch's designs, brought "All's Well to life itself as it probably never has been brought to life in the relatively few productions of its long history." Whittaker thought that the production history of All's Well That Ends Well was a consequence of it being "not much of a play." He based this opinion on the belief that the characters were difficult for audiences to identify with. He thought, however, that under Guthrie's direction, the play "blossom[ed] beautifully". He concentrated his review on this aspect, along with the acting, in an effort to show that he thought the first Stratford Festival achieved a high international standard of production and at the same time created something uniquely Canadian.

Whittaker thought that Guthrie's "putting it into a form of contemporary fashion" had much to do with making the "incredible story" clear and with facilitating identification by the audience with the characters. He observed how Irene Worth as Helena was largely responsible for "a kind of magic" in the
production. He attributed this to her being "an actress whose extraordinary skill is concealed only by extraordinary charm." Whittaker was similarly impressed by the performance of Eleanor Stuart, a Montrealer, whom he thought was a "gracious, wise, charming Countess of Roussillion." He judged this "a performance of very real distinction" and "a characterization worthy to be placed, as it was, side by side with that of Alec Guinness as the King of France." Largely because of Guthrie's direction, Moiseiwitsch's design work, and a high calibre of acting by Canadian, English and American actors, Whittaker believed that with this production, Stratford had "accomplished stature in world theatre."

After the first Stratford Festival, there was a noticeable change in Whittaker's critical style. Impressions were analyzed more sharply, comparisons were made more freely and frequently, and there was a wider range in what he liked and disliked in the theatre. It seemed that witnessing the two Shakespeare plays done with such quality, and in the context of something unique to Canada, made him all the more ambitious for Canadian drama and theatre and he was inspired to help it grow. In October, 1953, for example, he saw the Jupiter Theatre's production of Ring Round the Moon, Christopher Fry's adaptation of Anouilh's L'Invitation au Château, at the Royal Alexandra. He found the costumes and individual performances by the Canadian actors 'elegant'. He predicted that as the production continued, it would become "well-nigh dazzling" with its theatrical effects. A couple of months
later in his column, however, in a much less awe-struck tone, he
described Fry as a writer "who elevates casual play-craftsmanship
with brilliant verbiage." This suggests that he had been
impressed by the high quality of the Jupiter Theatre's production
which had made an international play seem more substantial and
better-crafted than it actually was.

Although Whittaker was always supportive of Canadian
playwrights, he became much less forgiving when he detected flaws
in basic technique. The opening production of the New Play
Society's 1953-54 season was Mazo de la Roche's *Mistress of
Jalna*. While Whittaker acknowledged the significance of the
occasion with both the author and Lieutenant-Governor in the
audience, he gave a lukewarm review to what he too often found to
be "tepid writing". He pointed out that Mazo de la Roche was one
of the country's most popular novelists but thought that in
adapting her "romantic picture of Jalna" for the stage,
something such as her characterization of Gran was "not acceptable
dramatically." He pinpointed this problem of craftsmanship:

> Miss de la Roche has perhaps expected her readers to recall what a terror Gran is, and failed to state this in theatre terms.

Whittaker was saying that the character of Adeline Whiteoak, who
came to Jalna as a bride in the nineteenth century, is underwritten
in the play because de la Roche counted on audiences knowing what
she becomes in her old age. This review of *Mistress of Jalna* also
suggests that Whittaker wanted Canadian playwrights to produce
truthful, rather than romanticized, statements about Canadian
When Whittaker saw Lister Sinclair's newest play, *The Blood is Strong*, staged by the Jupiter Theatre in the auditorium of the Ryerson Institute in December, 1953, he found the Scottish humour and language 'delightful' but concluded that the play "impresses as a series of vignettes, rather than a play with any great shape." He faulted both Sinclair and the director, Leonard White, for not "tightening up" the script for production. Whittaker was noticing not only playwriting problems but also the lack of suitable theatres for productions of Canadian plays. The Jupiter company sought more elbow room than that available in the Museum theatre but fared even less well in the "Gothic austerity" which characterized the hall at Ryerson. Whittaker did remark on an aspect of the play that was actually accentuated by the atmosphere of the hall:

One of the things Mr. Sinclair is saying for us in the play is that the hankering for a homeland far away is a natural part of the development of a new land, a cushioning against austerity.

Aware of the adverse effect unsuitable playing spaces were having on the fragile professional Canadian theatre, Whittaker spoke out against this situation:

It is no secret that the Ryerson Institute venture of Jupiter has not been successful or too happy. The formidable atmosphere of Ryerson...proved too strong for the tender bloom of Canadian professional theatre. The small capacity of the ancient auditorium offered no guarantee of financial success for the plays Jupiter Theatre was to stage there. After two shows, it has been decided to abandon that part of the current season.

In late December, 1953, prospects for the Canadian theatre
included the opening of a third professional theatre, the Crest, in a converted movie theatre in Toronto. Whittaker reviewed their first production, *Richard of Bordeaux*, by Gordon Daviot, in January, 1954. This provided him with an ideal opportunity to encourage Toronto theatregoers to support Canadian talent. He claimed that "the well-known Canadian 'inferiority complex'" had much to do with Canadians supporting imported attractions, and local talent that has had "the approval of foreign audiences." He believed that "the barrage of publicity" given to foreign shows in foreign periodicals, which had a strong impact but which could not be countered here in Canadian periodicals, played a significant part in the overshadowing of Canadian talent. He believed, though, that it was ultimately the responsibility of local audiences to support "home-grown products" if an overall "strengthening of the national confidence," such as was apparent in financial and government thinking, was to take place. In addition to an apparent high-minded nationalism, we also see Whittaker adding to the critic's function that of the booster and bellringer, publicist before the event. Here, the influence of Alexander Woollcott is evident as this was a function accepted in North American criticism at the time, Woollcott providing the precedent.

Whittaker had not forgotten how just over a year before he had placed hope in the smaller professional theatres to provide material of international calibre that would make a good impression for the country abroad. If they were not supported at home,
however, it was going to be next to impossible for them to achieve this goal. Whittaker explored and examined this matter in a series of articles in 1954. In late January, for example, he began his column with the question, "What kind of plays do local audiences like?" He then gave a partial answer to his question by saying that neither the New Play Society, the Jupiter, nor even the new Crest theatre had chosen their plays over the past year with "the right balance of literary distinction and audience appeal." He qualified this statement by allowing that because of difficulty obtaining performance rights, many plays that would be appropriate were not yet available in Canada. Relating the matter to an obvious frame of reference, Whittaker suggested that headline newspaper stories were chosen as such because editors recognized their appeal to the readers and local theatres would do well to select plays with the same awareness of public interest:

If local theatres cannot secure the plays with the ready-made news-value, that is, the headliners from Broadway and the West End, they must examine the plays of yesterday and the day before, with the eye of a news-editor, and with his knowledge of the people he's working for.

Then, perhaps, our theatre season will have the hit play it so badly needs. 213

This column, and probably this last statement in particular, gave rise to comments from representatives of the three local professional theatres and Whittaker printed them. Leonard Crainford, business manager of the Jupiter Theatre, used the example of the success of the British producer Sir Charles Cochran to defend the theatre's policy of using a board of directors to choose its plays. Whittaker speculated that this might be why it
was having financial problems and had to cancel the projected season, suggesting that this was not a good way for the theatre to conduct its business. Crainford conceded that "because of the tender growth here, these [business] problems should be made public," as was not the case in England.

Dora Mavor Moore, speaking for the New Play Society, said:

In Toronto, where native theatre is a relative novelty and the larger public has not acquired the habit of attending the theatre regularly, the professional groups are pioneering.

The Museum Theatre, with its tiny stage and lack of wing space, was not only technically crippling but also too small to yield a financial return large enough to cover costs. Whittaker stated matter-of-factly that "the technical limitations of the Museum Theatre...rule out any play with large casts, three and four settings, quick scene changes and elaborate furnishings." Mrs. Moore thought it was important to watch for a pattern in public taste. By that time, the New Play Society had staged fifty-three plays and Mrs. Moore observed that

in order of popularity, the public has liked its Spring Thaw revues, its Shakespeare and Shaw plays.... The establishment of Canadian theatre calls for not only pioneer actors, producers and playwrights, but also audiences that are pioneers in spirit.

Whittaker thought that Mrs. Moore's experience in the Canadian theatre made her comments particularly authoritative, hopeful and inspiring. The next step after asking the question of what kinds of plays local audiences liked seemed to be to explore ways in which Canadian audiences could be encouraged to be better "pioneers in spirit," as Mrs. Moore suggested. To that end, Whittaker
addressed some of the more immediate issues and in March, 1954, he focused on acting, asking whether the Canadian style favoured the British or American school. "The answer is yet to come," he said, "for the Canadian acting style is not yet developed sufficiently to describe or relate to its background." Whittaker believed that because of the popularity of the Stratford Festival, the emphasis would go in the direction Tyrone Guthrie and the English stars he was using were taking it. However, the influence of the American theatre, which Whittaker knew had its own acting style, could not be overlooked.

Whittaker told his readers that American teachers like Sanford Meisner, Harold Clurman, Stella Adler, Uta Hagen, Lee Strasburg and Elia Kazan taught what could be called The Modified Method...a development of the celebrated Stanislavski Method." He quoted Gwyn Kelly, a Canadian actress on a scholarship in New York, describing this method: "They want simple reality - that is, the 'ouch' is no louder than the pinch." She also quoted Meisner as saying that "acting is living, really, under imaginary circumstances." Whittaker was escorted to the schools of Meisner and Clurman by the Canadian actors Lorne Greene and Anna Cameron, who were studying there. While a number of Canadians were studying this method, he did not think that this was the only acting style Canadians should be studying. It was clear from Dora Mavor Moore's observations that Canadian audiences liked productions of Shakespeare and Shaw plays. Plays by Shakespeare and Shaw were taught in Canadian schools and from his experiences in
both Montreal and Toronto, Whittaker knew that producing those plays was a Canadian tradition that could be built upon. He knew that "the young American actors searching for truth" had not had enough literary exposure to Shakespeare and Shaw to work productively with their texts. "They prefer to work for the meaning or the action of a scene," he said, "probing beyond the words for the intention of the playwright." Not only did Canadian actors require more traditional training to work effectively with those texts, but with the new Canadian drama requiring a new generation of actors to perform it, it seemed that the Canadian acting style, which Whittaker observed "so far besmacks a little of both" British and American schools, seemed destined to develop unique characteristics.

Whittaker believed that whatever style a particular actor might develop or be schooled in, a solid foundation of training in the craft was essential if he or she was to endure in the profession. He reminded himself of this when he saw Audrey Hepburn in Ondine in New York in March, 1954. Whittaker was able to place Jean Giraudoux's play in the romance genre. He thought that Alfred Lunt's production was

conceived on lines a little broad for the delicacy of the Giraudoux style, perhaps, but ones calculated to make its fantasy palatable to the Broadway audience. It is more pantomime than philosophic legend, but it is highly stylish pantomime, full of stage magic as well as Hepburn magic.

As Hepburn was "clearly of the stuff that legends are made of," however, Whittaker found her performance difficult to judge "because of her personal dazzle and the fact that she is divinely
suited to the role of Ondine." In spite of being beguiled, though, the critic showed that he looked for craft to give credibility to the work of even the most charming actors and actresses. He concluded his review with the proviso: "Whether she will outlive the town's enchantment depends on what acting talent lies behind that exquisite exterior and infinite grace."

Whittaker believed that Toronto audiences should have been exposed to more of the world's best theatre craftsmanship. In September, 1954, he bemoaned the fact that while Jean Vilar's Théâtre National Populaire, "essentially an actor's theatre," would visit Montreal, Toronto impresarios would not risk bringing the company to their city. Whittaker pointed out that the French-speaking population of Toronto was 27,000 strong and a visit by the company would foster French-English relations, "to say nothing of developing Ontario cultural opportunities." The Théâtre National Populaire was not brought to Toronto that year, however, and the question remained as to whether Toronto would accept a play staged in French at the Royal Alexandra.

In 1954, Whittaker looked to Canadian drama to fill in some of the gaps in Toronto theatre. Only a tiny minority of Canadian theatregoers could see performances by great stars in New York and London, and visits from foreign companies featuring virtuoso acting were a rarity. In September, 1954, the Crest presented the first staging of Robertson Davies' *A Jig for the Gypsy*. Whittaker emphasized that the play, written six years earlier, was "not a new play." Like *Fortune, My Foe*, it had attracted international
attention. It had been presented a couple of years earlier by the British Broadcasting Corporation. The production at the Crest, however, was its first staging. Whittaker thought that *A Jig for the Gypsy* differed from *Fortune, My Foe* and *At My Heart's Core* in that it

*forsakes the free discussions of the other works and hews more firmly to a line of character comedy throughout, with a lift into something like fantasy at the end.*

Whittaker believed that the play, set in Wales in 1885, "is not concerned with Canadians, save inasmuch as we are part of the human race." It did provide, however, something that Whittaker thought was essential, yet rare in Canadian plays - "a star role," in the character of Benoni, which was played by Barbara Chilcott in the Crest production. "It is a part," he said, "that any actress might pray for - bold, elemental and full of very good sense."

He recognized the value of this as a selling point to international producers:

> It is because of this central character of Benoni that the play is likely to go further abroad than did the two Canadian plays [*Fortune, My Foe* and *At My Heart's Core*].

In December of 1954, Whittaker reviewed Upper Canada College's production of Davies' *A Masque of Aesop* and he saw that the playwright was "using a form neglected in our day." He recognized Davies' willingness to experiment with forms and saw some of the positive effects of this for Canadian drama.

If there was a group of actors that was going to appeal to audiences in both classical and modern plays, in 1954, it seemed as if it might be the Canadian Players. Formed from the Stratford
company with an intention to take productions on tour, and led by Douglas Campbell and Tom Patterson, this was described by Whittaker in his review of Shaw's *Saint Joan*, their first production, as "a group with a future." He defined their "platform production" as having

whittled down everything excepting the script and including the number of actors. Each actor, save two, has to play three roles. It carries no costumes and only a bare minimum of setting - some curtains, a few benches, a table, a drum. This makes touring possible, as the production is able to fit into any odd shapes and sizes of accommodation it finds.

Whittaker thought that until Canada had more theatres that were suitable for more elaborate productions, this was a practical and effective way to do touring productions. He remarked that this method had the effect of throwing "the emphasis back onto Shaw's arguments" and the play thereby "reaches its heights through the strength and conviction of his arguments." He also said that the Canadian Players "soar...not to mystic or dramatic peaks so much as into the wide, cool reaches of Shavian logic" with this approach to production. As a commentary on the craft of the actors (Campbell, William Needles, William Hutt, Bruno Gerussi, Ann Casson), Whittaker said that the play was "well-acted indeed" and while there was still unevenness in the cast, "the level is high." He thought that the only theatrical or dramatic 'losses' from playing in modern dress "were the stained-glass moments for Joan and the contrast of the Modern Gentleman in the Epilogue." It is clear from this review that production values were not necessarily compromised by the need to stage plays economically and flexibly when touring, and the high quality of
Canadian acting could be shown to advantage by touring productions.

In his column of December 30, 1954, Whittaker expressed the following opinion:

Canadians, to my mind, have attained quite sufficient culture to be able to comprehend the great works from abroad, if they are done well.

An appreciation of the theatre in its highest form should surely encourage Canadians to express themselves in the theatre, and then we will find our own culture represented on the stage. 249

He thought that the Crest in Toronto and the Canadian Players with their touring ventures were making invaluable contributions in this respect. However, it was the Stratford Festival that he believed was "in a sense...our first National Repertory Theatre:" 250

Let anybody who has the vision and the cash work out a similar venture, capable of travelling, and we will have something very useful. But it will have to have the same scope and be on the same scale as Stratford to be worthy of the title National. 251

Consistent with this idea of developing a theatre of a standard to compare with others in the world, Whittaker reminded his readers in his January 1, 1955 column:

Naturally, it's the theatre of the year to come we're interested in. Not only here in Toronto and in Canada generally, but in the whole wide world. 252

Whittaker continued to emphasize in his reviews that directors and actors had a great deal to do with the impression made by a play on an audience. For example, he said of the Crest's February production of John Whiting's Marching Song:

As our attempt to interpret this difficult play will likely occupy all our space, we will say here that it is our impression that the Crest production does Mr. Whiting notable service. 253

Marching Song is a deliberately dense, allusive and cryptic script
which any production would have difficulty clarifying. It is implicit in Whittaker's statement, and evidenced in the struggle he actually had in coming to terms with the play in his review, that the Crest production did little to clarify the script.

Whittaker had a similar experience one week later when he saw *The Dark Is Light Enough* in New York. He noted that the Canadian actors, Christopher Plummer and Donald Harron, were given good reviews, especially Harron, whom Walter Kerr called "first rate". However, Whittaker thought that while the production "had improved considerably since Toronto...it still falls short of interpreting the Fry verse and the Fry meaning." He concluded that while this Broadway opening with its "fashionable assemblage" for an audience, "was certainly a great occasion," it was "no night for a poet."

In April, 1955, Whittaker recorded the enthusiastic responses in New York to Canadian radio dramatist and actress Patricia Joudry's first stage play, *Teach Me How to Cry*. He quoted playwright Mary Chase:

> Pat, you've written a beautiful, beautiful play...the finest statement for courage and against self-pity that I've ever seen.

In preparation for the staging of the play at the off-Broadway Theatre de Lys, Joudry went to New York with a play she knew was "too long" but "with a marked manuscript, with many proposed cuts." In a reversal of usual procedure, Joudry had to plead with the producers and director George Schaeffer to allow her to make cuts in a script that they and the actors had fallen in love
with. Whittaker recorded Joudry's surprise:

"It wasn't that the producers and director disagreed with my particular cuts, and had suggestions of their own. It was just that to everything I suggested cutting, one of them would cry out in anguish, 'You can't cut that. It's my favourite line.'"

"But Miss Joudry is trying to maintain the objective view," said Whittaker and quoted her: "Because it's an actor's play is no assurance that it's going to be a critic's or an audience's play."

The fact that Whittaker did not express an opinion about this suggests that he may have questioned Joudry's objectivity and reserve. Perhaps he felt that she should have gone along further with the instincts and emotionalism of the American writer, director and producers, and especially the actors. In light of the critic's response one month earlier to the Lynn Fontanne-Alfred Lunt Broadway production of Noel Coward's Quadrille, this might have been the case. Whittaker expressed his high opinion of the Lunts, saying that they had "formed a partnership so individually superb that they rank as one star, and that among the brightest of the theatrical firmament of our day." His expressed opinion of Quadrille, however, was proportionately low, as he said Coward's wit was 'limp'. He believed the 'lightweight' play was not worthy of the Lunts and as he knew that only one or two more productions could be expected from "these two superb mountebanks," he regretted this. "Resentful - and apprehensive," Whittaker remarked that the achievement of the Lunts in Quadrille was "the illumination of emptiness."
The example of *Quadrille* illustrates that Whittaker was capable of evaluating playwriting and he was honest in his judgements regardless of the nationality of the playwright. In the context of Broadway, if Coward was capable of writing a play that was so insubstantial that it required the best performers to carry it through production, then a Canadian playwright could be more at ease about accepting help from high calibre theatre practitioners. *Teach Me How to Cry* was an outstanding piece of writing but Whittaker probably thought Joudry did not need to be so 'objective' towards the Broadway production of her play. Despite having witnessed this, it came as something of a surprise to Whittaker that a play or two by Shakespeare required similar attention. In August, 1955, he saw *Titus Andronicus* at Stratford-Upon-Avon, and in his review he said that "the dramatist has a long way to go before his horrors illustrate an emotional cataclysm as they will do in *Hamlet.*" With the 'magnificent' Olivier in the title role, however, and director Peter Brook taking "a bold, hard-driving, unemotional attack," the production was an unexpected success for the critic. "It was a great occasion," he said, "and none but the best workers in the theatre could get away with it."

Whittaker's experience with *Titus Andronicus* left him "doomed to disappointment," however, at the production of Stratford-Upon-Avon's *Macbeth.* Primarily, this was due to the fact that it was directed by Glen Byam Shaw, whose style contrasted sharply with that of "the brilliant and inventive Peter Brook."
remarked that

Mr. Byam Shaw's Macbeth does not set out to be brilliant and inventive. It contents itself with providing a straightforward framework to support Sir Laurence's Thane. 277

Whittaker unenthusiastically referred to Roger Furse's setting as 'handsome' and 'sober' and said that "of innovations there are few." He concluded that "quite obviously, Stratford has depended on Sir Laurence to pull its Macbeth up to glory singlehanded." Whittaker acknowledged that other critics thought Olivier's was "the best Macbeth of our time." In his estimation, however, "the best was none too good." Olivier himself said that he had an 'off' night but this did not explain the failure. Whittaker said he was 'amazed' by a 'device' used in the famous 'tomorrow' soliloquy in which the words were changed to get Olivier past "the audience's familiarity with the speech but leaves us feeling cheated." He was not only responding negatively to a performance given by a 'tired' Olivier but to directing and design work that he clearly disliked. It was clear that Whittaker preferred the innovative work of Brook to the functional work of Byam Shaw and Furse, and that even an actor of Olivier's calibre could not breathe life into a production directed and designed without imagination. From this, Canadians could learn to be more confident and daring with their own creative efforts in the theatre.

A couple of days before seeing Macbeth, Whittaker saw John Gielgud's and Peggy Ashcroft's production of Much Ado About Nothing in London and it is evident in his review that he thought the
production could have benefitted from more imagination and
innovation. Gielgud was Whittaker's touchstone for quality
throughout his career as a critic. He thought that in general the
supporting company of Much Ado was not equal to the "honesty and
unmatched skill" of Gielgud and Ashcroft but included in the
cast was a Canadian actor, Richard Easton, whom Whittaker had
directed at Brae Manor in the forties, and he said Easton gave "a
fine performance" in the role of Claudio. Whittaker was pleased
that a Canadian actor held his own with a couple of the world's
finest actors. However, he did not find the highly polished
exterior of the production satisfying. "The rest of the company," he said, "is full of polish, elegance and emptiness."

Whittaker's expectations of and responses to these productions
he saw in Britain were probably conditioned somewhat by productions
he had seen earlier in the year at home in which he saw both high
standards and high levels of creativity. In April, for example,
while he criticized the Playcraftsmen's production of Clifford
Odets' The Country Girl at the Dominion Drama Festival for "an
excess of naturalism," and needing "a little more charm," he said that the production was "first rate" and had "a fully
professional drive to it." The production won the Calvert Award
and Whittaker gave high praise to the designer, saying the
"settings are remarkable for the Toronto professional or amateur
theatre." In this context, Whittaker thought the production
values provided an effective and true representation of what he
believed was not one of Odets' best plays but "one of his most
workable stage pieces:"

It strikes one not as a loving interpretation of the play, so much as the real thing. This, we are convinced, is just the kind of production Mr. Odets had in mind when he wrote his drama. 296

Here, Whittaker had seen a production in which all the elements were fully integrated and he was pleased and confident that it would do well in the Festival finals at Regina. He seemed to favour balanced productions in which there was not too much professional skill and polish for the sake of skill and polish and at the same time not too much innovation for the sake of innovation. He looked to the Stratford Festival for this kind of balanced production at the highest possible level in the country.

Michael Langham's first year directing at Stratford was 1955. In March of that year, Whittaker reviewed what was essentially Langham's audition piece, Ostrovsky's The Diary of a Scoundrel, at the Crest. While Whittaker said that "it is not necessary, or possible, to form an estimate of Mr. Langham's particular character from this first production," it is evident that he detected both craftsmanship and imagination in the director:

He obviously has a gift...for creating good, graceful stage movement, for maintaining style and for inventing believably fantastic characters. The Canadian cast, almost without exception, does well under his banner. 298

That Langham had imagination and a mastery of craftsmanship was proven by his first Stratford production, Julius Caesar. Whittaker observed that "the shadow of over-rehearsal" hung over the production, "as if every action was unleashed a split second before the emotion which stirred it." However, he commended
the new director for "his often quite superb handling of the crowds," and he remarked that "there were many imaginative and even audacious touches in Mr. Langham's direction."

The theatrical events of 1956 confirmed to Whittaker that British, American and Canadian playwriting and production styles were remarkably different and that the best course of action for Canadians was to learn from and reject things from the international theatre but ultimately develop their own style for Canadian audiences. This was apparent in the reception of the Stratford Festival Company's Broadway production of Marlowe's Tamburlaine the Great in January, 1956. It was the first production of the play on Broadway and was sponsored by the American National Theatre and Academy, which Whittaker described as "a worthy body deeply concerned with the future of theatre beyond Broadway."

However, he wondered whether their academic interest and respect would counter their discovery that Tamburlaine the Great is archaic in construction and a soulless tale.

Whittaker was impressed by "the magnificence of the stage appointments and the masterly pictures Dr. Guthrie had evolved," but ultimately thought that they resulted in a production that was "too high-flown, for the first-night Broadway audience." He described their applause as seemingly "started by slapping two maple leaves together," indicating that it was more an acknowledgement of an outstanding theatrical achievement by the Canadian company rather than a statement of the theatregoers' enjoyment of the production.
In the same way that Guthrie knew how to direct plays for Canadian audiences, Harold Clurman directed for American audiences. On the same visit to New York, Whittaker saw a production of Christopher Fry's translated version of Jean Giraudoux's *Tiger at the Gates*. It was directed by Clurman, whom Whittaker described as "one of America's best stage directors." Clurman staged the play first in London, then remounted it in New York with most of the British cast intact. The role of Helen of Troy was played by Diane Cilento, an Australian beauty. Whittaker saw the London production and said that he found it out-of-place. What is essentially a conversation piece, had been directed to look like Julius Caesar, with lots of high talk and bold attitudes...and the delicate Giraudoux wit got blasted away. 308

Transported to Broadway, however, the show was "a hit" with the audiences but Whittaker was sensitive to how untruthful it was to the intentions of the playwright: the subtle ideas are pounded home by the bold staging. I don't think, personally, that it is any closer to realizing what Giraudoux had in mind, but this is undoubtedly the way to 'sell Giraudoux' in the American market. 310

Whittaker's tone and choice of vocabulary in this review revealed that he would not want to see Canadians direct that way.

Whittaker thought that it was possible for a director to be faithful to a text without sacrificing artistic vitality and inventiveness. Tyrone Guthrie, he pointed out, had four shows playing in New York in January, 1956. "And each one bears the stamp of the maker," said Whittaker, "a world-recognized sign of theatrical value." This was a goal for Canadian dramatists - to
be recognized internationally both as Canadian and for distinguishing individual characteristics. Whittaker also pointed out that all four shows bore "the stamp of this famous director," as well. Guthrie was probably closer to Thornton Wilder's intentions with his production of The Matchmaker (a revision of The Merchant of Yonkers) than Clurman was to Giraudoux's. (Wilder's close involvement in The Matchmaker rehearsals undoubtedly had something to do with this.) Not only did Whittaker prefer this to Clurman's work but he saw how Guthrie and Tanya Moiseiwitsch, the production's designer, felt artistically uninhibited on Broadway. Whittaker said that Guthrie had

seized on the simplicity and fun of the bursting metropolis as a basis for his handling of The Matchmaker and has lovingly introduced lots of contemporary stage-business which has now added quaintness to its charm...everything...has been mashed into the mix with Guthrie glee. 313

Moiseiwitsch revealed that there were other dimensions to her work than those exhibited at Stratford. Whittaker told his Globe readers that the designer,

whose subtly shaded and noble-flowing costumes are the pride of Stratford, Ont., would surprise you with the audacity of the 1880 attire she has designed for this, and the painted settings. 314

Whittaker referred to Wilder in this review as "one of our favorite American playwrights." He thoroughly enjoyed the treatment Guthrie and Moiseiwitsch gave to Wilder's text and was indicating how valuable their work was in Canada.

A couple of weeks later, Whittaker reviewed Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. He showed little sympathy for the collaborative effort of
Tennessee Williams and Elia Kazan and was clearly disapproving of their work. He had great difficulty writing about the play because of the nature of the characters and the subject matter, and produced an uneven, biased review. He acknowledged that this production had won the Pulitzer Prize and the New York Drama Critics' Circle Award and, running on Broadway for close to a year, that it was "still one of its top attractions." However, he called the show 'controversial' and clearly differentiated between the work of Williams and Kazan to give structure to his review. He gave credit to Williams for his playwriting skill but made no attempt to hide his personal feelings:

Mr. Williams, like it or not, is perhaps America's most gifted playwright. His grasp of theatrical form and content, the dialogue which makes poetry out of ordinary speech, his ability to conjure high-colored characters and his attack on a powerful theme are undeniable. He believed, however, that Williams and Kazan "have set out to make a Broadway hit rather than to create a piece of fine theatre," and added that:

one is particularly conscious of Mr. Kazan's contribution to this play's success, although normally the work of a director in close collaboration with a playwright is almost impossible to estimate.

Whittaker described the actors, particularly Burl Ives in the lead role as "haranguing us like vaudevillians," which was an uncharacteristically derogatory criticism for him to make and he attributed this primarily to the writing and directing:

The effect of this way of playing and way of directing is to heighten the dramatic values of Cat on a Hot Tin Roof to such a degree that one sits stunned before it, unmoved by its people but bruised by its reality.
With a tone of cynicism that was not typical of him, Whittaker said towards the end of his review: "What is Mr. Williams getting at, if it isn't just the Broadway money?"

Whittaker's inability to properly come to terms with Williams' play gives us insight into his critical sensibility:

I can't help thinking that in reaching for the glitter and the guts, they have missed the higher thing. And it was in their reach, too. The Broadway "glitter and the guts" was offensive to him and blinded him to any "higher thing" in the production which, as he stated earlier in the review, was present in every play by Williams. He concluded that Cat on a Hot Tin Roof was "a play about some very unattractive people involved in two very unattractive plot lines." In this review, Whittaker revealed his desire for theatre that was lovelier than life; he was not prepared for a play which makes the "higher thing" the telling of difficult truths. He thought Canadian playwrights ought to aim at making splendid occasions, rather than at writing exposés of human 'unattractiveness'.

Whittaker thought that playwrights like Terence Rattigan, John Osborne and Eugene O'Neill, who wrote in more conventional styles, were better models for Canadian playwrights because their work was better crafted than Williams'. He thoroughly enjoyed Rattigan's Separate Tables, "a cunningly devised entertainment...with old-fashioned, thoroughly recognizable acting," when he saw it at the Royal Alexandra in November, 1957. He admitted that Olivier's performance in Osborne's The Entertainer had much to do with the
favourable impression the play made on him, but he thought that "Sir Laurence is on to a good thing in angry young Mr. Osborne."

Whittaker thought that Osborne was "a playwright of undoubted gifts with the abrasive quality notably missing from British dramatists since Shaw." When he saw *Look Back in Anger* at the Royal Alexandra in September, 1958, he remarked that "the Osborne dialogue is first-rate, full of direction as it is of surprises." Whittaker showed that he recognized the quality and importance of Osborne's work. He said that Mr. Osborne writes of a whole generation of direction-less people, intellectuals able to express themselves very clearly, but without an audience. *Look Back in Anger* has provided them with that audience.

There is no doubt Whittaker thought that producing Shakespeare was a worthwhile pursuit in Canadian theatre. After seeing the first productions at Stratford, Connecticut, however, he thought that "America is perhaps misguided in so doggedly wooing the Bard, and should, instead pay more attention to its own best playwright, Eugene O'Neill." This was after seeing a production of *The Iceman Cometh* directed by José Quintero in Greenwich Village in mid-1956. Whittaker described O'Neill's characters as "not pretty people but...very real and their humanity is on a large scale, significantly so." Whittaker thought that this production realized an ideal in indigenous theatre and he remarked:

Here is American theatre at its most impressive, playing a rarely seen work by its most distinguished dramatist, staging it imaginatively in its own setting, performing it with intimacy and truth.

After seeing the first production of *Long Day's Journey Into
Night, also directed by José Quintero, in November, 1956, Whittaker's estimation of O'Neill as "the greatest American playwright" was confirmed. He called the production "a distinguished one" and gave the setting his highest possible tribute, saying that "it would have done credit to Robert Edmond Jones, who designed those earlier Broadway triumphs when O'Neill first burst, full-scale, on the American theatre." Jason Robards Jr., whom Whittaker had called 'outstanding' in The Iceman Cometh, "scored the personal success of the play" with his performance as the older Tyrone brother, Jamie. While both Williams and O'Neill were expressionistic writers, Whittaker preferred the more traditional, controlled writing of O'Neill to Williams' excessiveness. He saw the universal appeal of O'Neill's plays and how O'Neill was able to work with the themes of international modernism while at the same time being a distinctively 'national' playwright. His vision was realized in production by highly skilled American theatre craftsmen. Whittaker would encourage the realization of this ideal in Canada.

Whittaker's reviews indicated that by the mid-1950s, Canada had counterparts to American and British theatres, directors, designers and actors. It was clear, however, that Whittaker was still searching in Canada for playwrights like O'Neill, and Osborne whose work consistently expressed national character and identity. By the end of 1956, he was referring to Patricia Joudry as "an insistent voice in Canadian play writing." She had written three stage plays by that time and all three had been produced. "In our
theatre," he said, "we must listen to every playwright, seriously and hopefully, and such an insistent voice as Miss Joudry's must be heard." When he saw her second play at the Garden Centre Theatre in Vineland, Ontario, Whittaker concluded that director Leon Major had been too hard-hitting in his interpretation of The Sand Castle, when Joudry's writing actually required a much lighter touch. When he reviewed Three Rings for Michelle at Toronto's Avenue Theatre in November, 1956, he saw the actors experiencing similar difficulty trying to perform her work:

In the first act, Miss Joudry clouds the issues with such flights of symbolism that we can only stand by and watch the actors struggling in their different ways to make the language their own, and to point its vague significance. 340

As was the case with a number of playwrights of this era, Joudry's background had been writing for radio, and Whittaker noticed technical problems with her stage plays. By the time he saw her fourth play, The Stranger In My House, directed by Dora Mavor Moore, he was convinced of her talent, but was also able to pinpoint what he found problematical about her writing style. "Miss Joudry's gift for dialogue," he said, "has always been marred for us by an over-rich use of symbolic imagery."

In November, 1956, the Crest produced Bright Sun at Midnight by John Gray and Whittaker thought it was a landmark event:

As no other playwright in Canada has done, that we can recall, John Gray has taken a political and emotional issue of the present day and flatly set it on the stage, all argument and affront. 342

Gray used the story of Herbert Norman, Canada's ambassador to Egypt who committed suicide, as the basis for his play. Whittaker
realized that Gray had altered the facts of the story somewhat and taken licence to go beyond the melodramatic fact and the political implications to examine the quandary of a man who has dedicated his life to the service of his country, and finds himself a politician. 343

Whittaker recognized a central problem in the play's form and said that it "has a theatrical excitement that is not merely topical, while avoiding the truly dramatic." The importance of Bright Sun at Midnight, however, was in the presenting of contemporary reportage in dramatic form on stage. Whittaker concluded that this was "a unique, argumentative political drama of stature." 345

When he reviewed Marcel Dubé's Zone at the end of 1956, 346 Whittaker said it came "laden with special significance." He saw not only "strong drama" but "high promise" in Zone, which he hoped was a trail-blazer for other Canadian plays. After winning at the Dominion Drama Festival, Zone was expanded into full-length from a one-act play, staged for television, and then produced in repertory. Whittaker thought that progressing in this way, Zone swung "the whole of our theatre into its arc." With a leader named Tarzan, the characters of the play were inspired by American 'romances' - comic books and films. However, the play embraced the theme of victimization, central to Canadian literature, and Whittaker saw it as "a melodrama, but one with its feet in truth." Contributing to this sense of truth was George Luscombe, who, as Passe-Partout, Whittaker found to be "the most authentic" of the actors.

In Dubé, Whittaker found a Canadian counterpart to John
Osborne. He said in his review of *Un Simple Soldat*:

Canada has its own 'beat' generation and its own angry young man of talent to speak for it.

Mr. Dubé, make no mistake about it, is a genuine and conscious spokesman for this beat generation. He speaks for the young people trapped in the tight, rigid, drab districts of Montreal's East End. And when we say trapped, we are not using the word lightly: there are heavy pressures of economy, tradition and language which sharply confine the Montreal East Ender. 352

Whittaker was obviously drawing on his knowledge of the Montreal socio-economic structure and understood the plight of Dubé's people. He remarked that Dubé presented "the question of the beat generation in a nutshell," on the one hand presenting a hero who could "be seen by some as a poet, as a victim of unthinking society," while on the other, he could be viewed as self-pitying and unsympathetic to his even more beaten-down elders. Whittaker thought that the primary importance of *Un Simple Soldat*, however, was as "a strong social document from Canada's angry, protesting, expressive and talented young playwright, Marcel Dubé."

When Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde presented *The Time of the Lilacs (Les Temps des Lilas)* in the company's first visit to the Royal Alexandra, Whittaker found it refreshing to see that Dubé had range in his playwriting. He found this play, directed by Jean Gascon, to be "rather Chekovian in mood, if not in shading," the issues, "stated without subtlety, but still gently." With "compassion for old people, as well as despair for the younger ones," Whittaker saw Dubé's perspective on the society he wrote about as similar to that revealed in his other plays. The gentler
tone of *The Time of the Lilacs*, however, made the sound quality of Dubé's craftsmanship more evident to the critic than it had been before:

"It is not a startling story he has to tell but it is engrossing. It employs the useful theatrical device of the stranger who enters the quiet of a household and who turns that quiet to despair. But it is certainly well told, mingling pity with its truth." 358

Having thus exhibited technical skill, a range of tone, and a consistent personal vision in plays that had the ring of truth to them, Dubé had achieved a great deal by the end of the 1950s. The fact that he was still not thirty years of age and had written eleven full-length plays also made him a playwright of promise. In many respects, Dubé was the exemplary Canadian dramatist of the time and a counterpart not only to Britain's Osborne but to America's O'Neill as well. However, Whittaker did not proclaim Dubé a truly national playwright. The same spirit that moved him to call *Fortune, My Foe* Canada's first national play did not rise in him in the case of Dubé. His viewing on Broadway of Ray Lawler's Australian play, *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, in February, 1958, may have made him more reserved about making such a statement.

While this "first-class play with much native charm and general appeal," was considered the best play in London's West End the previous season, it received "a very cool reception" on Broadway. Whittaker thought that this was a loss to the Broadway audiences, though, for he found the play to be "acted with enormous truth by the Australian actors, who have an unvarnished simplicity and great directness." In this context, Whittaker found the
hero of the play "deeply impressive". He believed that the
Australians involved in the creation of this work had two messages
for their international audiences and he recorded them as follows:

First: Look, here is a whole way of life and living and
speaking that you didn't know about. Second: See, these people
share the same dilemmas as we do and respond in exactly the
same way. 363

Here was a drama which was written and produced with national
authenticity and at the same time had international relevance.
Whittaker immediately recognized its importance as a model for
Canadian theatre and drama:

Why should Canadian audiences be given a chance to see
this play? Because they might get more out of it than the New
Yorkers do. Australia and Canada share very many similar
problems and conditions, more than they are aware of. It would
be good for Canada to welcome the Australians at this
particular time, and Canada might learn something of
advantage. Even if it's only that a play must be written from
the heart and the life you know. 364

Both Summer of the Seventeenth Doll and The Glass Cage by J.B.
Priestley had been produced in London's West End the year before
and the Australian play outshone the Canadian production.
Evidently, Whittaker believed that Canada had not yet produced
a play of this nature and needed a similar achievement from one of
its playwrights.

The questions of what this play would be like and how it would
be staged arise. Whittaker disliked Death of a Salesman, The Member
of the Wedding and Cat on a Hot Tin Roof for their clamorous
subjectivity - the characters reject the public world for their own
private fantasies. He also disliked Gielgud's production of Much
Ado About Nothing, finding it emptily elegant (over-socialized,
and concerning itself with public behaviour as opposed to private emotion) compared to the best of New York theatre (*The Iceman Cometh, Long Day's Journey Into Night*). It follows that Whittaker would have prescribed something in the middle of these extremes. *Tit-Coq* fell into this category. Whittaker liked the play because *Tit-Coq* must be a good citizen and conform to social dictates despite his love for Marie-Ange. From Whittaker's responses to the work of Patricia Joudry, which he found more openly emotional than a play like *Tit-Coq*, yet less controlled, formal and decorous than European work, we can see that her plays were what he thought more appropriate for Canadian audiences.

Whittaker thought that at the end of the 1950s French Canadians were still leading the country in acting and production. In March, 1958, he published an article called "French Canada's Success Story" in *Theatre Arts* magazine. It was about Montreal's Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde which was founded by five French Canadian actors who had begun their careers as members of Father Émile Legault's Les Compagnons de Saint Laurent. Whittaker emphasized that the company had been able to attract and hold an audience in Canada which was difficult because they played in French and the French-speaking population in Canada was much smaller than the English-speaking population. He said that

the development of Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde would constitute a remarkable story of success in its own right. But a greater achievement is revealed when it is seen as part of the renaissance of French-Canadian theatre. A French-language theatre, limited in audience by a language barrier but fired with a strong pride of nation, can turn disadvantage to advantage. 366
Although Whittaker filled in for Walter Kerr of the Herald-Tribune in the fall of 1958, he continued to write reviews and articles for the Globe while also writing for the New York paper. It was during that time that he reviewed the first visit of Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde to Toronto and he expressed concern about the lack of audience support. He described the company as "Canada's best-known company" and Toronto as "Canada's best theatre-town." However, he thought that the reception given to Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde at the Royal Alexandra was "most disappointing" and puzzling. This prompted him to give a warning that Toronto's "long-standing reputation as Canada's first theatre-town is not to be taken for granted." His concern caused him to give an important analysis of the way Toronto had been developing during the past decade. He said it had developed from a one good audience town into a centre which can provide many different audiences. But we are not a metropolis yet, and we can't leave it entirely to 'the other audiences' to keep the town's reputation bright.

Whittaker said in this article that he believed that Toronto would eventually "emerge as the theatrical centre of Canada." He pointed out, though, that to be a theatrical centre, to have impresarios bringing you the best in theatre for your approval, you must have audiences.

At the end of this article, Whittaker expressed his hope that Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde would return to Toronto. He suggested that they perform something like "a bright Feydeau farce in English," which would enable Torontonians "to appreciate their vivid style more easily."
In an article called "The Audience is There", published in *Saturday Review* in October, 1959, Whittaker summarized the progress made in the Canadian theatre in the 1950s. He listed the Stratford Festival, the Canadian Players, the Crest, the Dominion Drama Festival, Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde, Gratien Gélinas' Comédie Canadienne, and the Vancouver International Festival as important 'innovations'. He referred to the Massey Report and said that although it "cautiously remarked some ten years ago" that "a national theatre does not depend on bricks and mortar...the commitment such things represent can be heartening." The Canada Council was formed in 1957 and Whittaker acknowledged the importance of its support of the theatre. "The standards set are high," he said, and he had also seen the freedom of expression Canada gave to its artists.

Although Whittaker was hopeful, he was concerned, about a couple of things. By the late 1950s, the theatre had changed in New York and London and Whittaker realized that the great occasions were being rivalled by occasions of a different kind. Broadway was becoming a tourist attraction offering mostly musicals, and serious drama was moving off-Broadway into 'alternative' milieux. In London, great occasions survived longer but were increasingly surrounded by subsidized, anti-establishment theatre. (In the next chapter, Arnold Wesker's *I'm Talking About Jerusalem* will be discussed as an example of this.) Whittaker was uncomfortable about recommending this kind of theatre.

Whittaker was also concerned about the position of the
Canadian actor in Canadian society. Throughout the decade, he observed the fact that Canada consistently produced fine actors but, for the most part, these actors continued to be an exported commodity. He said that

although the Canadian actor is heartened by his new opportunities, he is not content to wait until the small population of his large homeland will support a theatre fully. He goes away to study, to gain experience, to win notice, to earn. He knows he is more appreciated when he returns, although that appreciation dwindles if he stays. 377

"But Canada still awaits its playwrights," said Whittaker.

A little over a year earlier, in an article called "Handsome Drama Prize", published in the Canadian Commentator, Whittaker explained why he thought it was so important for Canada to have its own playwrights:

The hope for theatre in Canada lies eventually with its playwrights. Borrowed plays can keep a theatre healthy as a place of entertainment and as an exchange of ideas from the world market. But a nation looks to the mirror of the stage to find its own face, too. It turns to the theatre in times of stress for affirmation of its ideals, findings, pride and character. 379

In this article, Whittaker gave details of a playwriting competition run by The Globe and Mail for the Stratford Festival. Whittaker explained that Stratford's Board of Governors, urged by Michael Langham who was at that time the festival's general manager and artistic director, was in favour of a plan to encourage Canadian playwrights, perhaps resulting in a play for the Stratford stage.
Notes


2. Whittaker, "Our Theatre" 8.

3. Whittaker, "Our Theatre" 8.


5. Whittaker, "Our Theatre" 8.


7. Whittaker, "Canada on Stage" 497-498.


68  Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 23.
69  Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 23.


Whittaker, "The Audience is There" 25.

Whittaker, "The Audience is There" 25.

Whittaker, "The Audience is There" 25.

Whittaker, "The Audience is There" 25.


Whittaker, "Handsome Drama Prize" 8.
Chapter 4
Developments in the Canadian Theatre, 1960-1967

Whittaker's call for more Canadian playwrights in "The Audience is There" was motivated in part by his desire for Canadian theatre to no longer be a borrowing entity. It was also brought about by his discovery in the late 1950s that the theatre had broken up into a number of theatres of different kinds. Off-Broadway and off-off-Broadway theatre in New York, and subsidized theatre in Britain had produced alternative theatre that was not aimed at the majority audience. Up to this point in Whittaker's lifetime, there had never been a minority theatre and he looked for a way to deal with it. As a result, he concentrated on theatre spaces, and problems in those spaces, in his reviews and articles in the early to mid-1960s. To a certain extent, he treated the situation as a design issue.

Some of the first problems he addressed in the early 1960s were ones he saw in the touring theatre. In March, 1960, for example, he reviewed a production of Friedrich Duerrenmatt's The Visit at the Royal Alexandra. It was directed by Peter Brook and it starred Alfred Lunt and Lynn Fontanne. He thought that Brook "directed the production with bold appreciation of its melodramatic possibilities." He also thought that the performances given by Lunt and Fontanne were brilliant, with the third brilliant performance...given by Teo Otto, the designer from the Berliner Ensemble who creates the ugly town with cleverly designed signs, fixtures and furniture against a plain, drab background - a faceless place becomes an anonymous town. 2

In general, Whittaker thought that the quality of the production
was very high but he found the play itself extremely unpleasant. He classified it as "one of the few genuine horror plays of the century" and explained that

The Visit is horrifying not so much because it presents a macabre situation with great conviction but because it's horror based on human greed. Greed erodes the evening as we watch it with a kind of terror.

A couple of days after this review was published, an article by Whittaker about this production appeared in the Globe. His primary concern was with the effect the play had on an audience and to that end he broached the question of the function of art in the theatre. On the one hand, he praised Duerrenmatt for his skill as a playwright and said that he was "plainly an artist, with a splendid knack of steering a narrative through ironic channels." However, he also stated that "if art is concerned only with ennobling us, Mr. Duerrenmatt is not concerned with art." Clearly, Whittaker was able to appreciate the artistic merit of the play, yet his concern was with explaining to his readers that this was a different kind of playwriting than they had seen before and it elicited different responses. "It is a chilling play," he said, "which begs no warm response from its viewers" but added that the 'chilling' effect was obviously what the playwright intended. He stated flatly: "We did not identify with any of the characters in The Visit." Because he did not identify with the play's characters, he thought that his readers also might have difficulty identifying with them.

The problem of audience identification, especially with touring theatre, was something Whittaker dealt with constantly in
the early 1960s. He was not always favourably disposed towards unpleasant European plays like The Visit or the productions of Broadway musicals. In January, 1960, for example, he reviewed The Sound of Music in New York and made it clear that he thought it was little more than a work designed to appeal to large audiences. His distaste for it was heightened by the fact that he thought the story of the Von Trapp family was 'stageworthy'. He saw Rogers' and Hammerstein's musical treatment of it, however, as 'vulgar'.

In April, 1960, Whittaker reviewed The Music Man at the Royal Alexandra. Although he enjoyed it much more than The Sound of Music, and discussed the attributes of Meredith Willson's writing and the staging of the production, the tone of his review was lukewarm and never overly enthusiastic. "The Music Man...has one quality essential to a successful musical," he said. "It makes you feel good." Whittaker's responses to plays like The Visit and The Music Man indicate that he was unenthusiastic about this as touring theatre for Toronto audiences. He was also concerned about the future of Toronto as a destination for touring productions. This was evident in the comments he made about the O'Keefe Centre, which opened in Toronto in October, 1960. He was quick to set it apart from the Royal Alexandra:

At present it would be safe to estimate that as a house for big spectacles, the O'Keefe Centre will be one of the most impressive on the continent. We can take pride in that and also satisfaction in the fact that to acquire it, we have not had to let go of the Royal Alexandra Theatre. 12

The O'Keefe Centre was designed primarily to stage big musical productions and the impression immediately given in Whittaker's
reviews of its productions was that it was simply too big for intimacy and basic communication between actor and audience. Whittaker gave indications of this in his review of Camelot, the first production at the theatre:

The singers' big moment comes in a sonorous round song called Guenevere, but the loudspeaker system was not kind to this on opening night. It also made the dancers seem heavy by broadcasting their footfalls. 13

Whittaker's review of Laurence Olivier's performance as Henry II in Jean Anouilh's Becket also gave proof of this problem. Originally, Olivier had played the role of Becket, but when Anthony Quinn, who played Henry II, refused to tour, Olivier took over what he recognised as the better part. Whittaker thought that the Toronto audiences were fortunate to see Olivier play this role. He commended Olivier for his beautiful playing and remarked that in the face of his "central performance, all other performances turn pale." However, he described Olivier as spitting out the words and "rolling on the floor in an agony of love and hatred for the implacable archbishop." It was clear that it took every ounce of Olivier's ability to project his voice and physical movements to produce an impressive effect in this theatre. Whittaker concluded that

here was a player with the maximum 'throw' any actor could have and he met the challenge of the 3,200-seat house without a microphone. 16

While Olivier had met the challenge of this new theatre, Whittaker made it clear that others should not have to do the same. He expressed his hope that the next time the producers behind Olivier's visit brought a straight play to Toronto, "they will both
remember that the Royal Alexandra is still the leading legitimate theatre in Toronto." In statements such as this, we see evidence of Whittaker's preoccupation with theatre spaces during this period of his career. In addition to the underlying reason, that of the increasing prominence of minority theatre in Toronto and the inevitable breakup of the one majority audience, there was undeniably a practical basis for this. For example, it was appropriate for Whittaker to conclude that the O'Keefe Centre was suited to musicals and that straight plays were better performed at the Royal Alexandra because of the designs of the theatres.

In the early 1960s, the Royal Alexandra continued to provide a number of the kinds of productions that Whittaker believed were appropriate for that theatre and for Toronto audiences in general. One of these was the traditional, classically-oriented touring production from Europe. Whittaker called the Piccolo Teatro de Milano's production of Goldoni's *Servant of Two Masters*, which visited the Royal Alexandra in March, 1960, "the most dazzling of theatrical entertainments imaginable." The play was directed by Giorgio Strehler, to whom the University of Toronto much later gave an honorary degree. Strehler went on to make a world name for himself after this production. Whittaker remarked on the "dazzling display" given by the performers and how Goldoni was "outshone all evening" by the "talented and stylish actors."

Although minority theatre was growing steadily in Toronto, Whittaker continued to promote the Royal Alexandra as the city's leading legitimate theatre. One of the reasons for this was that it...
continued to stage Canadian plays that attracted international attention, as had been the case with *Tit-Coq*. This encouraged Royal Alexandra audiences to see the Canadian theatre in an international context. Whittaker suggested that Canadians need no longer feel self-conscious about standards in their theatre. In November, 1960, for example, he reviewed Robertson Davies' *Love and Libel* and said that

such a host of old friends appeared on the stage of The Royal Alexandra last night that it was hard to remember this was the world premiere of a Theatre Guild attraction headed for Broadway. 20

The play was based upon Davies' book, *Leaven of Malice*, and Whittaker, believing this to be his best novel up to that time, observed that the author "reshaped his book completely to dramatic purposes." When he remarked that "Love and Libel [was] rich with actors familiar from our own theatre as well as with characters familiar from our own literature," he was telling his readers, and especially his friends in the little theatre community that this was a play and production they could identify with. Whittaker thought that with director Tyrone Guthrie "experiment[ing] along Bertolt Brechtian lines," and producing an "animated form of staging," this production of *Love and Libel* provided the Royal Alexandra audience with directing and design work that was in keeping with the best contemporary innovations in the world.

In 1962, Gélinas' *Bousille and the Just* was staged at the Royal Alexandra. Showcasing a production of an English translation of a Canadian play which had become "widely known, in both languages," and which "continue[d] a tour to other parts both of
Canada and the world," the Royal Alexandra was functioning as Whittaker's ideal Toronto legitimate theatre. Gélinas acted the role of Bousille, the pathetic victim, and gave a performance in which "the broad effect" was avoided but which produced a "a shocking but dramatically effective" ending to the play. However, Whittaker's response to this play was much more reserved than his response to Tit-Coq had been, primarily because of the emergence of 'alternate' theatre with its own theatre spaces. Where he had defended Gélinas' craftsmanship in Tit-Coq, he avoided the challenge of coming to terms with the unsettling effects of Bousille and the Just. At the end of the play, we are told that Bousille has hanged himself in the garage of the family home. Whittaker made no comment on this. He simply stated how much Gélinas was admired as an actor. Although he concluded his review noncommittally, saying that "in Bousille, he [Gélinas] has created another memorable figure in our theatre," it was clear that he thought this play belonged in an alternate theatre space.

Whittaker's belief that the O'Keefe Centre was too big for straight plays was confirmed once again when John Gielgud's Haymarket production of The School for Scandal was staged there early in 1963. It elicited a glowing response from Whittaker in which he emphasized the superb visual effects of the production. Impressed by the elegance of the costumes and settings, and the virtuosity of the acting of Gielgud and Ralph Richardson, Whittaker asserted that "nobody has seen it better done since Sheridan's day; nobody has seen it done more stylishly, more effectively, more
grandly." He added that "the production is not flawless, although some of its flaws are perhaps more easily perceived in the enlargement to our largest theatre." The O'Keefe Centre presented major stumbling blocks to productions of this calibre but Whittaker believed that these shows were still invaluable to Canada because they reminded audiences what top calibre international theatre was, and he made it clear that they should be encouraged to visit. "This School for Scandal is a notable revival," he said, "and must be admitted free to the country as a veritable work of art."

While it was evidently possible for a production like the Haymarket's School for Scandal to communicate some of its artistry from the stage of the O'Keefe Centre, it soon became clear that this was not possible for the newest, most experimental drama of the day. In January, 1961, Joan Littlewood's The Hostage was staged there and produced an effect that was at least incongruous and, at worst, completely without communication. Littlewood had studied at Britain's Royal Academy of Dramatic Art and had started her experimental Theatre Workshop in Manchester in 1945. In 1953, she moved it to Stratford in the east end of London. Whittaker described Littlewood in 1961 as "one of the most vigorous forces in the revived English theatre." He remarked, though, that while the Toronto audience was given "a chance to experience the celebrated Miss Littlewood's freehand style of direction," this "people's theatre" did not find the O'Keefe Centre "a cosy neighbourhood house." (Whittaker was obviously comparing Littlewood's own
Theatre Royal, Stratford East, an old, intimate music hall in the East End of London, to the O'Keefe Centre.)

Toronto's George Luscombe had studied with Littlewood and Whittaker described him as her "leading local disciple." Not only was Luscombe's 47 Fraser Avenue basement theatre a more appropriate facility for the staging of plays done in the style pioneered by Littlewood, but also it was ideally suited to the ongoing creation of this form of theatre and drama. In that respect, Whittaker referred to Luscombe as "one of Toronto's few truly creative artists of the theatre." In mid-1960, Littlewood quit her London Theatre Workshop. Whittaker knew that if Littlewood retired, Luscombe might take up her torch in Toronto. Consequently, Whittaker placed high hopes in Luscombe:

What brings Miss Littlewood's retreat to sharp importance in Toronto is the hope we place on George Luscombe's Workshop Productions, which is the local expression of Miss Littlewood's kind of theatre. Mr. Luscombe worked with Miss Littlewood in England and adopted much of her philosophy and her method. And, although his public offerings have been deliberately few and modest, they have already inspired much confidence and hope here. 36

Whittaker had been thrilled by Luscombe's "improvised circus play," Hey Rube!, which he had seen in February, 1961, and in his review he queried: "Why should we eye the second-hand work of Joan Littlewood here, as displayed in The Hostage, when we have the work of George Luscombe at first-hand?" Whittaker believed that the Canadian theatre audience was developing and this was an important indication by him that Canada needed no longer look abroad for a particular kind of theatre.

In November, 1962, he reviewed Luscombe's production of When
*We Dead Awaken* at the Fraser Avenue theatre. He acknowledged that "Workshop Productions have taught us more about *When We Dead Awaken*, and Ibsen himself, than we could get from our own studies," but he was unmoved. It is clear in the review, which emphasizes the heaviness of the text and the toiling of the actors, that Whittaker attributed being unaffected as much to the play as to the production. By 1963, however, when he reviewed *Wozzeck*, he claimed that Luscombe had moved away from Littlewood's school and was exploring personal interests through his theatre:

Mr. Luscombe was inspired by Miss Littlewood, but his own personality has plainly taken him away from any concept of Workers Theatre. From last night's production one comes away with a view of a creative teacher, turning inward to achieve a very personal expression. 40

Whittaker believed that by this time Luscombe was using the actors in his studio more as "puppets than pupils." "It occurs to us," he said, "that Mr. Luscombe is not trying to elucidate Buchner but rather uses him as scenario for a series of creative acting exercises, and experiments in arena staging. It is as such that this production is appealing." While Whittaker was not entirely comfortable about the way in which Luscombe was utilizing his actors in his theatre space at 47 Fraser Avenue, he did find merit in the experimentation and creativity that he saw there.

While the Royal Alexandra may have been more appropriate than the O'Keefe Centre or the basement of 47 Fraser Avenue for productions of plays like *Becket* and *When We Dead Awaken*, it could not satisfy the growing demand in the city for a theatre in which such plays could be produced. Since January, 1954, the Crest had
done a great deal to satisfy this need. Where the O'Keefe Centre was too big for most legitimate plays, however, the Crest, in Whittaker's view, was too small. In November, 1960, David Gardner staged King Lear "on the small Crest stage, made smaller by substantial staircases, a towering chimney and a high platform." Whittaker thought that "these confines provide, almost equally, a variety of playing spaces and a number of stumbling blocks." Whittaker believed that the play itself, "conceived on a more monumental plane than any other of Shakespeare's tragedies," also provided many stumbling blocks for performance. His review of this particular production presents us with a picture of actors inhibited by the scaled-down interpretation made necessary by the limitations of the small theatre, and he explained that they [the characters] must be acted large, trumpeting the lines allotted. This means a production conceived on a lesser scale, as is this one, must choose between rant and lack of scale. For the most part, they seemed caught between these two choices. The influence of the Stratford Festival on such productions was unmistakable. Whittaker tried to tactfully say that both the acting and the staging at the Crest paled when compared to Stratford, and this was made all the more apparent by a play like King Lear. It seemed from Whittaker's response to the Crest's production of Hamlet in 1964, however, that the theatre could generate enthusiasm in a show "patently designed for a student audience." Whittaker believed that this version of the play, directed by Jean Roberts and Marigold Charlesworth, was "a direct, non-theoretical study, taking care to clarify all major points and
give, above all, the narrative its full due." Richard Monette, then nineteen years of age, played Hamlet, and Whittaker called him "already an excellent rhetorician," although lacking because of his youth in the "wit, irony and compassion" demanded by the role. "But this student Prince has moments that will undoubtedly establish strong identification," said the critic, "from the school audiences at which the production is so wisely aiming."

In the middle of the next theatre season, Whittaker wrote a column about the Crest's interest in moving to a new location. "The Crest plays have suffered from a house basically unsympathetic in structure," he said. The owners of the Four Seasons Hotel offered the Davises a legitimate theatre space in their new Inn on the Park at Leslie Street and Eglinton Avenue. This, however, would place them even further away from the centre of the city than they already were. The Davises expressed interest in the new St. Lawrence plan for a performing arts centre at Wellington and Front Streets beside the O'Keefe Centre. At the end of August, 1964, however, Whittaker had to inform his readers that the Crest had been denied a Canada Council grant for the 1964-65 season. This marked a major turning point in the history of the theatre. In early September, 1964, Whittaker paid tribute to the Crest for "11 years of continuing theatre." He listed the talents discovered and the plays staged, emphasizing the productions of eleven Canadian plays. As for their overall contribution to Toronto, Whittaker concluded that "the Crest, in short, has been keeping us abreast of the times as well as making classics available."

He
remarked that the Crest had been a 'stronghold' for Canadian actors and that the country's leading directors, "Winnipeg's John Hirsch, Halifax's Leon Major and Vancouver's Malcolm Black... served at the Crest." Neither Whittaker nor the supporters of the Crest were able to turn the tide for the theatre, however, and it closed in 1964.

In 1975, in an article called "Recollections of Achievement", Whittaker said that single-handed the Crest had showed that that continuous production of home-grown theatre was possible in a town which had traditionally stood as a road company stopover for outside attractions since the old stock companies vanished. Whittaker had called the Crest "a Toronto theatre for Torontonians" but its contribution on a national scale was evident. It had helped Canada develop the theatrical independence Whittaker thought was so necessary.

In the summer of 1961, Whittaker had the good fortune to interview Edward Gordon Craig in Vence in southern France, several months prior to Craig's ninetieth birthday. "Such animation, vitality and kindness are extraordinary to find in a man who provides such a link with a departed golden age of theatre," said Whittaker. Craig attributed all of his knowledge and much of his inspiration to Henry Irving. Whittaker said he implied that his own work ("All those curtains and gauzes!") was simply a means to an end -

to a simplicity that is finally being achieved in theatres like Stratford's Festival building or in the projected Tyrone Guthrie Theatre in Minneapolis... or Bernard Miles' Mermaid Theatre in London.
Whittaker was attempting to establish a connection between Craig's work and the designs of theatres like Canada's Stratford theatre. Craig remarked to Whittaker, though: "Once they have done it, they should do it again differently. Not the audience part, but the stage. Success can be a kind of poison." Whittaker was quick to respond to this by saying that Tanya Moiseiwitsch was already completing plans to redesign Stratford's stage. Craig, by suggesting that new theatres should be built and then discarded, as only the new was exciting, was being idealistic and impractical. However, Whittaker gleaned from this that Craig "fears anything that might become set or static in the theatre." The redesign of the Stratford stage was minimal but Whittaker knew that Craig was suggesting that theatre artists must continually pursue innovation. Whittaker, as a theatre artist, understood this but had to struggle with his desire to keep the one majority audience intact while acknowledging new developments in playwriting and staging. His solution, when confronted by Craig's statements, took this form of a rather awkward compromise. He was trying to suggest in this article that the Stratford stage was appropriate for both traditional and innovative theatre and drama. Therefore, theatregoers could appreciate the new drama along with the traditional in this one theatre and continue to constitute one audience.

By the early 1960s, Canada had, in Stratford, a theatre of international calibre and importance but some of the country's best actors continued to work on foreign stages with foreign actors.
Whittaker explored Christopher Plummer's success in this context and related it to the Canadian theatre. He said that Plummer's acclaim in Becket on London's West End stage comes as a vote of confidence in the growing Canadian theatre. How else but confident can one feel when our theatre produces, and trains, an actor to stand with Britain's best and, better, to stand comparison with Britain's greatest. 62

Plummer played Henry II at the Aldwych theatre. Whittaker used the same kind of sleight of hand that he applied to Robert Gill's production of *Crime and Punishment* to compare Plummer's performance to Olivier's in the same role which Torontonians saw at the O'Keefe Centre:

First, let it be categorically stated that this London production is infinitely superior to that which Broadway and Toronto, saw. Its text is fuller: its supporting actors are notably more accomplished: its director, Peter Hall, has taken much more care and time to explore the relationship between the two leading characters which are, in turn, held in far better balance by Mr. Plummer and Mr. Porter. 63

It was clear from Whittaker's chronicle of Plummer's background in acting at the Montreal Repertory Theatre, the Canadian Repertory Theatre in Ottawa, the Jupiter Theatre in Toronto and the Stratford Festival theatre, that Whittaker thought Plummer was able to develop his acting talent because opportunities existed in Canada. Whittaker credited him with having "bite and edge, variety enough to encompass all the swift changes of the Anouilh text, and a sardonic wit which brightened the evening consistently." He concluded that Plummer has authority, high acting intelligence and that certain dangerous quality that makes us keep our eye on him. In his debut on the West End stage he is playing with discrimination, working for the play itself, and his best qualities look the better for it. 65
Similarly, Kate Reid, whose career Whittaker had followed since her student days at Hart House theatre, made her presence felt on the world stage. Early in 1963, she starred in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* on Broadway. She played the lead role and although it was only in the matinee shows, Whittaker said that "she made it her own." He remarked that Uta Hagen wrests it back in the evening but when Miss Reid is playing it on the matinees it is a role singularly hers." He gave Reid high praise for her contribution to Albee's intense and demanding play. "What shape *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?* has," he said, "seems to be what Miss Reid gives it."

Plummer and Reid were two of the most outstanding examples of Canadian acting talent. It was evident from Whittaker's reviews that by that time, Canadian actors could stand comparison with the best actors elsewhere. Not only had Plummer and Reid mastered the vocal and physical skills necessary to perform major roles in the classical and modern repertory, but also they had the ability to shape a production with their interpretations and to show a play off to advantage. From Whittaker's reviews of the Stratford Festival productions, there was every indication that Canada would continue to produce individual actors of the calibre of Plummer and Reid. He thought that John Colicos' performance as Cyrano de Bergerac at Stratford was a matter of national importance and said "the country learned...that it had not one but two actors capable of rising to the heights in that great role."

When Whittaker saw the work of director Peter Hall in England
in September, 1960, however, he was confident that individual
Canadian actors were equal to British actors but he was doubtful
that Canada had the depth required to form an entire company that
could match the British in skill. After seeing Hall's production of
_Troilus and Cressida_ at Stratford-Upon-Avon, he remarked that "for
the first time, our o'erweening pride in our own Stratford is
shaken. Could we muster such a company for this play?" He
explained that Hall had been assisted by John Barton, a Cambridge
don:

> Between them, they have brought the two main elements of
plot, anti-war and anti-romantic, and all the spiky,
extraordinary characters involved into one great abstract
form. It is a tremendous labor, accomplished with skill and
knowledge, and the awkward play is revealed as glittering with
satire, sunbursting with characterizations and shining with
splendid words. 71

The collaboration between the director and a member of the
academic community seemed to have produced dramatic and theatrical
effects that surpassed even the usually high standards of the
Stratford company. Over the next decade Whittaker would see a
number of drama and theatre departments created in Canadian
colleges and universities, and he would hope that collaboration
between them and the professional stage would raise the calibre of
the productions to the heights attained in England. As Ronald
Bryden emphasized, "one of the defining characteristics of a
profession is that it trains and apprentices its own recruits." 72

In 1960, a national theatre school was founded in Canada and
Whittaker, as one of its founders, placed high hopes in this
institution to train and put into apprenticeship people who would
help the Canadian theatre develop into a truly world-class theatre.

In April, 1958, Whittaker was one of a group of Canadians interested in the establishment of a national theatre school who met at the home of Pauline McGibbon, then president of the Dominion Drama Festival. The specific goal of this meeting was to plan a meeting with Michel Saint-Denis, who had adjudicated the Drama Festival finals in 1937 and 1950, and whose "name and ideas dominated the thinking of all those concerned with the creating of a Canadian theatre school." Saint-Denis, as guest speaker of the 1958 finals,

again stressed the need for a national theatre school in Canada and subsequently discussed the idea with the Rt. Hon. Vincent Massey, Governor General of Canada, A.W. Trueman of the Canada Council, and Roy Stewart. Saint-Denis also discussed the idea at a number of subsequent meetings in Quebec City which were sponsored by Lady Flora Eaton and the Rockefeller Foundation. From these meetings, some basic ideas emerged:

1) That a Canadian school should be conceived along the lines of Monsieur Saint-Denis' principles, adapted to suit conditions in Canada.
2) That it should be a national school.
3) That it should be bilingual in the sense that it would provide training in both French and English traditions under the same roof.

Shortly afterwards, Whittaker became Second Vice-President of a 'protem' committee established "to carry the ideas forward." This committee asked Tom Patterson "to investigate the problems of bilingualism, the school's financing, its best location, and other related matters." Patterson suggested that "in order to make a bilingual school possible Montreal should be the school's main
site, with side trips to Toronto and Stratford planned as part of the curriculum." In April, 1959,
the Secretary of State issued Letters of Patent to the Canadian Theatre Centre - Centre du theatre canadien as a national association of the professional and amateur theatre groups, organizations and individuals 'to assist in the promotion and development of professional and educational theatre in Canada.' 80

This provided an ideal opportunity for the formation of the school in Montreal. The 'protem' committee dissolved itself and Whittaker became one of seventeen members of the Canadian Theatre Centre's Pilot Committee which included Saint-Denis. This committee prepared "a blueprint plan" for the National Theatre School which opened shortly afterwards in 1960.

Whittaker's reviews of Stratford's 1962 season give a clear indication that not only individual actors but also the company itself was improving steadily and developing a style uniquely its own. "But perhaps the true achievement of the tenth season," said Whittaker, "lies in the fact, barely observed, that it swept the audiences with an all-Canadian company, without an international star." 82 Stratford had indeed built much of its reputation thus far on the strength of international stars who had been supported by the best Canadian acting talent. If the company was to emphasize 'all-Canadian' productions in the future, it would have to be able to continuously draw upon a reliable source of talent. The first public appearances of the students of the National Theatre School at the end of 1962 could not have been more timely.

Twelve students from the school performed in three one-act plays staged in the studio theatre on St. Luke Street in Montreal.
"Because I consider the National Theatre School the most important innovation in theatre since the Stratford Festival," said Whittaker, "the occasion of the first public appearance by the first group of students at this 2 1/2-year-old institution seems almost an historic event." Whittaker stated straightforwardly that the performances of the students were characterized by a lack of pace and that of twelve students, only one gave a true performance. In a nurturing vein, however, he qualified his commentary on the "disappointing evening" by saying that the students had reached the point at which they needed an audience from which they could learn the essentials of the actor's art. He thought that by playing to an audience, they could sharpen their "perceptions of tempo, variety; of all those things - beliefs and disbeliefs, respect and contempt, involvement and aloofness - essential in the achievement of any theatrical experience."

There was no doubt that good work was being done at the National Theatre School but by the end of 1962 it was obvious that there was still much more to do before the school could provide an institution like the Stratford Festival with the talent it needed to maintain its high standard of performance. With Whittaker having actually stated that he believed the Stratford Festival and the National Theatre School were the most important innovations in the Canadian theatre, it followed that he believed that a theatre that was truly national in character would exemplify what these institutions represented. At this point in Canadian theatrical history, they represented traditional values which aspired to meet
the highest international standards.

To turn to the Canadian playwriting of the early part of this decade, early in 1964, Whittaker interviewed Canadian playwright John Gray and quoted him as saying:

I'm anxious to see us do, without any embarrassment or sense of shame, work which is frankly designed for ourselves. Theatre has always been — in its immediate application — parochial and ephemeral. 86

Gray referred to William Hazlitt, who he said believed that "all art is national in character and execution." Qualifying his statements to the effect that he had no interest "in any pure, old-fashioned nationalism," Gray said that self-confidence was the primary quality that Canadian playwrights needed to develop. Then, their work would be beneficial "not only for Canada but for anywhere." Gray believed that Canadian playwrights were a decade behind their counterparts ("young, disturbed, committed playwrights...like Osborne, Wesker, Arden") in England. "The Canadian playwright," said Gray, "has the greatest opportunity and the smallest audience of any in the world."

When Whittaker saw the Wesker Trilogy at London's Royal Court theatre in August, 1960, however, he was unmoved and even irritated by the playwriting:

Mr. Wesker, as any man must who writes a trilogy, has a lot to say. He packs his characters full of political argument, and he is merciless in letting them expound. Some of his talk is vivacious and revealing, but there is too much of it. The play's most touching moment comes when the Kahns stop talking and pick up, one by one, an old folk tune as they work. 92

Whittaker did acknowledge that Wesker was "a playwright of courage, writing plainly out of his own knowledge...capable of perspective,
too. " He summed up Wesker's trilogy as being "an impressive study of changing life in England today, and would certainly be grasped easily in Canada today, easily and with considerable interest." Wesker's work seemed an English example of the "parochial and ephemeral" drama Gray had referred to and as such had relevance for Canadians. Whittaker was lukewarm at best about it, however, and he gave one of the strongest objections found in his criticism to date about this production:

One aspect of I'm Talking About Jerusalem which disturbs us, however, is the style in which it is presented under the direction of John Dexter at the Royal Court. It is ferociously played. I mean ferociously, rather than downright badly. Dexter directed Jerusalem in a style of highly charged acting modelled on that of the New York Group Theatre and Strasberg Actors' Studio. Whittaker was reacting to the fact that the acting in this production was highly sentimental. It brought more violent emotion to the subject than warranted. He may also have been expressing dislike at finding American-style acting in London. In any event, he thought that the acting style clashed with the atmosphere of the building itself. He called the Royal Court theatre a gem. High, small, intimate to a degree of perfection for the play of ideas.... Nevertheless, the actors in I'm Talking About Jerusalem shout and carry on as if they were trying to get their message across in Maple Leaf Gardens. Whittaker recognised that not all the new work he saw abroad was of a kind to appeal to Canadians. At home, playwrights were attracting audiences with the Canadian subject matter in their plays. In his November, 1960 review of Len Peterson's The Great
Eiunger, Whittaker referred to the play as "a sensitive, atmospheric narrative drama about Eskimos." He believed that in choosing to write about the Inuit, however, Peterson could not be authentic for his non-native audience and this gave the play "the handicap of being educational." He said: "Then, when we have enough data on hand, he asks us to share in a dramatic experience." He wrongly saw the conflict of the play centering upon "a struggle between the many and vengeful spirits of the Eskimo and the kindly, monotheistic religion of the white man." This made him insensitive to the spiritual dimensions of the play. The end result was that The Great Hunger seemed to be a 'Christian' or 'missionary' play to him and he had difficulty identifying with the characters. He said, though, that he found "a lot of quite theatrical enjoyment in The Great Hunger" and concluded that they can fascinate us, and teach us, and set us to brooding about the guilt of Canadians in improving the lot of the Eskimo.

James Reaney was a Canadian dramatist whose career Whittaker followed with great interest. When I interviewed Whittaker in 1993, he said, as he had said about Robertson Davies in one of his reviews of Fortune, My Poe, that what was exciting about Reaney was that he was writing "about us". The inaugural production of Toronto's Coach House Theatre in November, 1962, was of a new play by Reaney, The Easter Egg. Celebrating the opening of this "new theatre and a new play by a leading poet," Whittaker praised Reaney for the prolific quality of his writing and for creating a play "more shapely than his first one." (He had reviewed this
first play, *The Kildeer*, almost three years earlier.) Whittaker seemed disappointed that *The Easter Egg* "lack[ed] those gobbets of macabre symbolism that gave *The Kildeer* such character." He said that

the Stratford-style Coach House two-level stage makes an uncomfortable bow as the interior of one of those large old houses 'in the English part of Lower Canada.' But Pamela Terry, as director, uses the type of stage to some advantage in breaking down the naturalism of her play. 109

Whittaker praised Terry for fitting a play which "defied simplification" into this 'eggcup' of a theatre. Although he called *The Easter Egg* a "weird item," he thought it was a "stageworthy drama" and concluded this review by stating that he welcomed the occasion that combined the opening of the theatre and the production of this new Canadian play.

In the early 1960s, Whittaker was happy to see the arrival of new Canadian plays but he saw that staging them in traditional legitimate theatres was not always appropriate. The shift in his perspective from the 1950s, when he had celebrated the success of a play like *Tit-Coq* at the Royal Alexandra and hoped that theatre would give production opportunities to all new Canadian dramatists, was becoming more noticeable. The writing of James Reaney was very different from that of Robertson Davies, as was Arnold Wesker's writing different from Terrence Rattigan's. Simply, while Whittaker thought that the work of all these dramatists was stageworthy, he saw Reaney and Wesker as alternate theatre playwrights whose work was not shown to advantage in the more traditional theatres. Whittaker's preoccupation with theatre spaces
during this period of his career was also a response to the inevitable diffusion of the one big audience of the 1950s into the many minority audiences of the 1960s. It is evident in his reviews that he was torn between a desire to see all kinds of theatre flowers bloom together and a preference for the one big audience of the 1950s consensus. On the one hand, he wanted to say that there was a kind of theatre to suit every taste, but he felt, on the other hand, that he must tell his audiences what to expect on particular kinds of stages. Ultimately, he was frightened by the breakup of the majority audience because of his reservations about the new abstract drama.

At the same time, the Stratford Festival company, encompassing Canada's best actors, directors and designers, continued to grow strong and Whittaker's admiration of it was apparent. In April, 1964, the company staged its production of Love's Labour's Lost at Chichester, England, as part of Canada's contribution to Britain's celebrations of the birth of Shakespeare. The production had been tremendously successful in the 1963 Stratford Festival and it had been a showcase for the wit, sensitivity and masterful ability of director Michael Langham to work with actors. In two reviews appearing in the Globe, Whittaker emphasized the audience's response to the production. "John Colicos spoke too quickly at the opening of the play," said Whittaker, "but by the end of the first act he held the audience in the palm of his hand." He said that by the beginning of the second act, the Canadian actors were plainly feeling at home on the Chichester stage, helpfully remodelled to suit them. Langham's graceful production rose delicately to a moving climax.
Whittaker related responses to the Canadian actors that showed how well received they were. He said that time and again during the performance the members of the audience paid tribute to the actors by searching out their names on programs. Obviously the names were new to them, as were the talents of the performers. When Colicos brought the first act to a close, a voice behind me said: 'That's a very good actor.' 116

The Earl of Bessborough was also in the audience and Whittaker quoted him as remarking that the company was "absolutely superb". The presence of the son of Canada's former Governor-General, with whom Whittaker had worked at the Montreal Repertory Theatre, consolidated a theatrical connection that went back to the earliest days of Whittaker's involvement in theatre. If the Dominion Drama Festival had once been the highest court for Canadian theatre, it had now been replaced by this enthusiastic reception of the Stratford company abroad. Their skill was recognized at Chichester, with even "the drama critic of the Times praising last night's production." 118 British critics said that the Canadian players used the Chichester thrust stage more skilfully than the resident National Theatre Company.

The Stratford company's second production at Chichester, Timon of Athens, was equally successful. "John Colicos' Timon of Athens earned deep respect from the audience," said Whittaker, "which was spellbound by Michael Langham's eminently clear version of a difficult play." 120 Despite the overwhelmingly positive response to the Canadian actors at Chichester, Whittaker judged Olivier's Othello "the performance of Shakespeare's quadrigennial year." He concluded that Olivier's interpretation, which was "first of all
a physical interpretation," and "more fascinating than moving, more astonishing than overwhelming," was characterized by originality and this is what set him apart from other actors. While Canadians had distinguished themselves on an important international stage, there was still a handful of foreign actors, like Olivier and Gielgud, whom Whittaker would recommend over Canadians, but if they visited, Canada could now provide a suitable place for them to perform.

The success of the Canadians at Chichester marked an achievement that was over a decade in the making in Canada – that of attaining a truly international standard of production in classical drama and having it recognized as such in the international theatre community. This achievement was confirmed with the Company's production of King Lear at the Stratford Festival that same year, also starring Colicos. Whittaker said that with this production of it [Lear] at Stratford, the nation can rest content. We can hold our head high among the nations of the world in the celebration of Shakespeare's Four-hundredth anniversary. I wish they all could see it. 123

In a paper called "Shakespeare in Canada before 1953", delivered in 1964 as part of the Stratford Papers on Shakespeare series Whittaker said that it is not too extravagant a claim to make that Michael Langham's King Lear is one of the deepest and most complete productions of that play the world has yet seen. 124

With this accomplished, it seemed more urgent than ever that Canadian dramatists aspire to similar achievement. It was with great enthusiasm, then, that Whittaker attended the conference for Canadian dramatists in the Gaspé, sponsored by the Canada Council
in August, 1964. In his column in the *Globe*, he stated what ultimately had to be said about Canadian drama at the time:

As dramatists are the first to admit, without a drama, Canadian theatre exists as a borrower rather than a creative force. 125

French language and English language writers were represented by dramatists whose work Whittaker had reviewed and they were able to easily agree on common concerns and needs. Gratien Gélinas, Marcel Dubé and Jacques Languirand, along with Len Peterson, Jack Gray, Jack Winter and Brian Swarbrick pooled their ideas and compiled a list of issues which would form the agendas of future meetings. Whittaker related these to his readers:

These included the examination and trying-out of scripts, the encouragement of small theatres to serve as workshops for new plays, and the assessment, translation and publication of new plays as well as the larger issue of subsidy for playwrights and productions. 126

Whittaker remarked that while the Canada Council had already given subsidies, they were not yet as large as the dramatists needed.

Whittaker found that Australian dramatists continued to create exemplary plays for Canadian writers. He thought that Alan Seymour's *The One Day of the Year*, which he reviewed at Hart House late in 1964, accomplished what Lawlor's *Summer of the Seventeenth Doll* had. He said that while informing audiences "deeply and clearly about life down under," it also made a point "that can be applied to any country, to any time." 127 He said that in short, *The One Day of the Year*...manages to be both national and international at the same time, a trick Canadian playwrights must learn soon. 128

Whittaker described the plot of the play as centering upon
a son and his father, representing the younger generation in revolt against the older generation. The focus of the conflict was Anzac Day, Australia's national holiday. A university student, the son, along with a female student ally, planned to publish an article exposing the hypocrisy of Anzac Day. The father was an embodiment of the "blind nationalism" of "the Old Australia" and as such is set into conflict against his son. In an ending which Whittaker found disappointing, the play culminated in a crumbling into self-pity on the part of the father and a fight between the boy and girl students, which Whittaker said was characterized by sentimentality. "But even when we question Seymour's solution," said Whittaker, "we admit that he is writing very actable scenes."

Whittaker thought that the presentation of the play in Hart House theatre was appropriate. The casts of the plays, under Robert Gill's direction, had by that time become composed almost exclusively of students, with very occasional appearances by senior university personnel to play older roles. Perhaps Whittaker was seeing in this production more than just a play that provided what he thought was a good example for Canadian playwrights. He was excited about the opportunities Hart House Theatre provided for young people to learn skills and become involved in the developing Canadian theatre.

From 1958 to 1965, a number of theatres were founded in major regional centres in Canada. 1958-59 was the inaugural season of the Manitoba Theatre Centre which was formed by an amalgamation of the Winnipeg Little Theatre and John Hirsch's semi-professional Theatre
77. The plays were performed in the Dominion Theatre, which had 800 seats. Tom Hendry was a founder along with Hirsch. Hirsch and Hendry were the original administrators of the theatre. The Manitoba Theatre Centre became "nicknamed 'Stratford West' because so many Stratford actors worked there in the winter."

In July, 1963, the Neptune Theatre opened in the Garrick, which had formerly been a vaudeville theatre and cinema, in Halifax. The theatre had a 521 person capacity and Leon Major was the first artistic director. The Neptune was established to function primarily as a repertory theatre. One of the founders, Jack Gray, "advocated repertory seasons with the best plays of the past in balance with the new, especially Canadian works."

In 1962, the Queen Elizabeth Playhouse, a 670 seat theatre, was completed in Vancouver. In 1963, Malcolm Black directed The Hostage by Brendan Behan with the newly-formed Playhouse Theatre Company. Michael Johnson was the manager, producer and designer of the company's first season. Malcolm Black was the artistic director from 1964-67. The Vancouver Playhouse eventually came to offer "winter seasons of about six productions of London and New York hits, a few classics, and an occasional Canadian play."

In 1964, the Confederation Centre was opened in Charlottetown and the Charlottetown Festival was founded the next year. Mavor Moore was the first artistic director and Anne of Green Gables premiered the first season. John Drainie's Laugh with Leacock and Spring Thaw were also presented during the first year. "The
Festival has adhered to its policy of an all-Canadian repertoire, modifying it in 1968 to one of producing only Canadian musicals, with an emphasis on new work."

Also in 1965, the largest regional theatre in Canada, the Citadel Theatre, opened in Edmonton in a renovated Salvation Army Citadel. Bernard Engel directed the first play, *Who’s Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*. The first two artistic directors, John Hulburt and Robert Glenn, were American. The Citadel had 1300 subscribers in its first season.

Montreal's equivalent to these theatres in major Canadian regional cities was Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde. Amongst its founders in 1951 were Jean Louis Roux and Jean Gascon. Gascon ran the theatre until 1966. The first production in 1951 was Molière's *L'Avare*. It was seen by 15,000 people in twenty six performances at the Salle de Gesù. That was a record at the time. In 1957, the company moved to the Orpheum, then returned for one season to the Salle de Gesù. Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde then moved to the PortRoyal Theatre at the Place des Arts and was resident there until 1972.

In mid-June, 1963, Whittaker expressed his opinion that director John Hirsch and the Manitoba Theatre Centre (Hirsch had just signed a long term contract), were central to the growing regionalism in the Canadian theatre. Whittaker believed that with the new theatres being built in Halifax and Vancouver to join the Crest in Toronto and Le Théâtre du Nouveau Monde in Montreal, "a theatrical circuit could be established to exchange the best
productions between various regions." He believed that this could be the germ of a national theatre:

This vision is one we count on heavily, knowing from experience and from observation that Canada cannot depend on any one Broadway - its own, the original in New York or London's West End. But the scheme depends on the solidity of its representative centres. 136

If individual regional theatres could become sufficiently strong, then Whittaker believed that productions of "plays with popular appeal," such as Shakespearean dramas, Broadway musicals, new Canadian plays, and new American dramas such as *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* could be shared between them. "The first actors of Canada's national theatre" would be professionals such as Frances Hyland and Heath Lambert, already prominent in the Canadian theatre.

This was not an unrealistic vision for Whittaker to have for Canadian theatre at the time and Hirsch was a logical choice on whom to focus. Whittaker had seen Hirsch direct *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* in 1963 at the Crest. He had been pleased (and, indeed, vindicated somewhat) with the Canadian director's "adjustment of script." Hirsch discarded the Elia-Kazan-inspired Broadway ending, which allowed the character of Big Daddy to dominate the last act, and returned to Williams' original version. Whittaker remarked that

this *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* reduces the ugliness of the conflict, finds an ideal lurking within it, gives Maggie the benefit of the doubt in the matter of greed vying with love. Where on Broadway *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* was shattering, at the Crest it is absorbing. 140

Whittaker found the reduction of ugliness an aesthetic
criterion and thought that this production was a landmark in the Canadian theatre. He put it forth as an example of the way in which the country was "achieving its own style." He believed that this was largely a subconscious achievement but one which was characteristically Canadian. "Condemned to borrow its plays, he said, "it [Canada] has developed a defense by which it translates the expressions of other cultures to suit its own. In the theatre this is no sin."

However, Broadway, the centre of North American theatre that made productions like the Canadian Cat on a Hot Tin Roof possible, was itself in decline. While Broadway had, in Whittaker's view, been in decline for some time, the opening production of the new Lincoln Centre Repertory Theatre in January, 1964, confirmed his opinion that it was no longer a dependable source of plays or productions. While the Lincoln Centre had "an exciting new free-form stage" and was "a splendid acting arena," Whittaker thought that Arthur Miller's After the Fall was a poor choice for an opening play. The new Broadway enterprise drew together some of the best talent available - designer Jo Mielziner, director -- producers Elia Kazan and Robert Whitehead, and Jason Robards Jr. in the lead role. Whittaker described After the Fall as "a feat of biographical dramaturgy unmatched since...A Long Day's Journey Into Night" but he stated quite bluntly that he believed Miller had no right to exploit his relationship with Marilyn Monroe in this "confessional play." He could not help but point out the irony that Monroe's failed attempt to "engage herself with the world of
serious art should result in her becoming a dynamic part of a high-reaching theatrical venture like the Lincoln Centre Repertory."

This seemed an extreme example of the clamorous subjectivity that Whittaker noticed in American playwriting in the 1950s.

In June, 1964, Whittaker's column, entitled "The Malaise of Broadway", outlined how Broadway and Hollywood, the two citadels of popular culture in America, had fallen into decline. For a variety of reasons (ticket scalpers, catering to tourists on expense accounts, kick-backs for those connected with hits), Broadway was quickly turning into "a court theatre," accessible only to those who could afford to pay the high ticket prices. A resulting public investigation put the Broadway theatre in "the hands of the politicians." Because of this, Whittaker believed the road is plainly more important than ever before, not as an added subsidy for such sky-rocketing, but to offer strongholds for the protection of honest art and entertainment in the theatre. Whittaker was being unrealistic, however. The road was dying and was no longer providing the amount or quality of theatre it once had to Toronto theatres.

By contrast, the Canadian theatre was improving steadily. Earlier in 1964, Whittaker had written an article introducing the Stratford season. Stuart Burge and Jean Gascon were sharing directing duties with Langham. Whittaker believed that the Stratford company had been so successful at Chichester primarily because they were "a company which had a unity of purpose, much unity of training and certainly a unity of philosophy." He felt that a similar unity of style was lacking in the 'fledglings'.
Olivier's National Theatre and the Royal Shakespeare Company. Also, the Stratford Festival company continued to challenge itself and progress. Whittaker believed that in staging Richard II in 1964, the company was exploring a new frontier:

But pure mounting beauty of speech often has been avoided in the past as unsuited to this stage, perhaps to this country. Burge, as the company's newest director, claims that evenly accented Canadian speech is good for Shakespearean verse but there are many Canadians who miss the Gielgud line in the lyrical passage. 153

Whittaker was saying that verse-speaking at Stratford lacked Gielgud's quality and he knew he was not alone in missing it. At the same time, he recognized that Burge's choice to have the Stratford actors present the more lyrical Shakespearean verse in Canadian accents was another important move towards Canadians developing their own theatrical style. This, along with the French influence of Gascon, helped them further develop their character as a truly Canadian classical company. Whittaker was already looking forward to national participation on their part in the country's upcoming centennial celebrations.

In December, 1960, Whittaker interviewed Eugene Ionesco in New York prior to the premiere of The Rhinoceros. Whittaker prefaced the interview with the observation that

the theatre is now playing host to a new kind of drama, abstract plays which discard narrative and its time-honored attributes of easy characterization and even identification. 154

Whittaker asked Ionesco how a critic is to approach abstract plays. Ionesco cautioned that a critic should not begin with preconceived ideas, which would simply make his work self-serving. "It is rare
that the critic understands the work of his time," said Ionesco. "It is the poets who recognize other poets. The critics are 20 years behind the times. They can neither clarify nor help the new work." In an effort to thwart Ionesco's attack on critics, Whittaker asked if there was hope for a critic who was "not antagonistic." Whittaker said Ionesco believed that there were two kinds of critics; those who were too severe and those who, in being too generous, were mistaken in their generosity. Ionesco thought that artists simply needed friends because they were ahead of their times and they needed critics because they were "the most intelligent part of the audience."

Ionesco had praised the young directors who had done his plays for not trying to cut down on the 'audacity' of the texts but cautioned that they must direct so that the fantastic is played "as if it were quite normal." Whittaker quoted Ionesco as saying that "the imagination of the playwright must be left free" and that while the theatre is "the place where one can do the most, it is the place where one does the least."

Whittaker's interview with Ionesco was divided into two parts, published a week apart. There was much of substance in Ionesco's comments in the first part, yet Whittaker gave the impression in the second part that he was reluctant to face some of the critical challenges the playwright presented to him. Ionesco described *Rhinoceros* as being "mainly a fairy tale about people who are turned into animals" and he allowed that "there may be significance more important in the play than the one I give it."
Whittaker recognized that this had the effect of "throwing the onus of interpretation back on the critic, and the audience which comes to his plays." He said that in allowing the audience to read what they wanted into his play, Ionesco was "a playwright who takes no responsibility." Whittaker asked Ionesco how critics should deal with non-representational drama. Ionesco responded, humbly and sympathetically, that Whittaker was alarmed by abstraction. However, Whittaker was posing as naive in these articles. As an artist, and particularly a theatre artist, he undoubtedly understood the principles of abstraction in art and how they would be manifested in the new drama. It is clear that he was doing this for his readership whose taste, he believed, was for conventional, representational drama.

The growing popularity of what Whittaker called "abstract drama" made him nervous and he was clearly tentative in the early 1960s about promoting it too enthusiastically to his readers. Indeed, at the end of the second part of his interview with Ionesco, he expressed his fear for the survival of the realistic play:

If Eugene Ionesco has a major success, the conventional, realistic play will sustain another body blow, and the abstractionists will edge one step further in the theatre to the position they have captured in the world of painting and sculpture.

Eleven months earlier, in January, 1960, Whittaker had reviewed the production of James Reaney's The Killdeer and had celebrated the playwright, who he said "had disclosed himself as a wild, free spirit in the theatre." He argued that the murder
trial was "a classic form of drama." In his view, however, Reaney "discard[ed] procedure." While he said Reaney produced a play that "becomes a shambles" in some respects, he added that "his verse is easy to tongue and ear." He noticed that Reaney displayed "a rare talent for the macabre" and that the actresses Frances Halpenny and Virginia McLeod "plainly had a joyous time celebrating such a strong new voice in our theatre."

Whittaker's most perceptive observation about The Killdeer was that Reaney "conducts a remarkably happy wedding between Canadian colloquialism, Freudian symbolism and high melodrama." In this, we see his perception of Reaney's creative maneuvering of form to incorporate modern and universal artistic impulses in an original Canadian context. He was impressed by the talent of Reaney and he concluded his review by declaring that he awaited his next plays with "avid interest."

When Whittaker reviewed Harold Pinter's The Caretaker in August, 1960, he diagnosed it as a "word-concert, anti-plot play" and remarked on how the "compound of non-sequiturs" was able to "surge with meaning." While he thought that the work was actually sparse, he felt that Pinter's "extensions and variations on a theme [were] endlessly fascinating." He concerned himself, for the most part, in this review, with Pinter's theatrical unconventionality. He thought that the setting was "representationally enough" but he was struck by a particular actor being given "a rare freedom from the actor's need to act, speak or otherwise communicate." When the characters finally
did engage in dialogue, though, Whittaker observed that it was punctuated with long pauses, "but somehow not embarassing ones."

Whittaker was sensitive to the fact that there was meaning in Pinter's play, however unconventional his techniques were. He therefore conveyed the impression that he enjoyed some of the play's abstractness and recommended it to his readers. "This is abstract playwriting," he said, "which is no longer denied a place in our theatre." He illustrated in this review that he was beginning to encourage his readers to respond positively to changing dramatic conventions, especially to the diminishing emphasis on narrative:

Out of the flow of argument, observation and unrelated anecdote, one starts to fish a symbol or two, as playgoers will when simple narrative is denied them. Whittaker made it clear, however, that it was the presence of both "immensely actable" parts in the play and highly skilled actors like Donald McWhinnie and Donald Pleasance to interpret them, that enabled him to enjoy the play to the extent that he did.

In this review of The Caretaker, Whittaker compared it to The Rhinoceros and concluded that Ionesco, unlike Pinter, had "gone beyond his depth in making a full-length play out of this material." Critically, however, Whittaker was not as unaware as he made out in his reviews of these two plays. Evasiveness and frequent lack of clarity indicate that he saw himself as mediating between the new drama and his Toronto audience. It is evident that while he accepted "the abstractionists" in the theatre in 1960, he thought their space should still be small
because of their unconventionality. The conflict in Whittaker between disclosing his artistic knowledge and the necessity of appealing to his uninitiated readership was not easily resolved. He steadily encouraged his readers to accept abstraction, however, because he saw that Canadian playwrights were also writing in this style.

In the early to mid-1960s, Whittaker continued to push his readers in this direction. In March, 1962, he reviewed Jean Genet's *The Balcony* at Toronto's Central Library Theatre and categorized the play as an example of the Theatre of the Absurd, "that most modern of categories." He quoted a passage from Martin Esslin's book that analyzed why absurdist plays were difficult for audiences to assimilate. Whittaker did not shy away from Genet's iconoclasm and even suggested that his readers might enjoy some of it if they saw the play:

"You feel the vengeful spirit of the playwright underlying every word he hurls at vested authority, and may secretly sympathize with him. And, although the language is the language of the brothel, it has the ring of honesty." Whittaker concluded that this particular production, exhibiting strong movement and characterization, was an excellent one.

Less than one month later, he reviewed Genet's *The Blacks* in New York and it is clear from his review that Canadians were seeing the same kind of theatre at home as audiences abroad were seeing. In addition to defining Genet as an absurdist, he placed him in the group of "angry man" playwrights -- but as a middle-aged member, not young. To encourage his readers to be more at ease with a playwright like Genet, Whittaker created the impression in his
review that he was at ease with Genet's writing and his comments were straightforward:

His particular style of theatre, which is theatrical rather than realistic, symbolic rather than representative, allows him to give full flourish to the hatred he is convinced must lie behind the years of oppression. 191

It is evident that Whittaker still felt he had to try to soften the impact of a play like The Blacks on an audience. For example, he remarked that impersonation was minimized in certain of the play's scenes, particularly that of a white woman's rape and murder re-created. He said that Genet's reason for this was that he did not want the audience "to take this situation as real or important." He commented that there were "several levels" of meaning in the play but he did not analyze them in any depth and it was evident that there was a level of ironic inversion in the play that he avoided discussing altogether.

In August, 1964, George Luscombe's Workshop Productions performed Jack Winter's The Mechanic at the University of Waterloo. This production was pivotal in the Canadian theatre in a couple of ways. To produce a 'fantasy' play that emphasized action over words, Whittaker said that

it is rather as if Winter has watched all Luscombe's classes in improvised movement and worked them into a divertissement. 195

The stage at the University of Waterloo was "a miniature version" of the Stratford Festival stage and this, along with its lights, trapdoor and sliding panels, was used fully in Luscombe's staging. Whittaker described the event as "more of a happening than a play" and pointed out that the engagement was
"as much sought by the university as the group" as "part of a long range plan for a new kind of university theatre." It was important that Whittaker had seen that a Canadian play of this nature could be produced so successfully on a miniature version of the Stratford stage and that he had found such technical merit and enjoyment in it because it enabled him to envision the possible staging of Canadian plays at Stratford in the future.

In December, 1964, Whittaker reviewed Edward Albee's Tiny Alice which was staged at the Billy Rose Theatre in New York. He described it as a religious mystery play that initially recalled Christopher Fry's writing, "all word-play and wit" but by the end had risen to a drama that was "all abstraction and ritual." Previously, this might have been material that Whittaker would have told his readers was obscure, especially as he described the four characters of the play as "symbols all." With John Gielgud, Irene Worth and William Hutt starring, however, he felt confident that he could tell his readers of the high artistic achievement and subsequent audience appeal that was possible in abstraction in the theatre. He attempted to cause his Globe readers to relate to the Broadway audience and suggest that they, like their American counterparts, should see more of this kind of theatre. He said that Gielgud's anguish and humility in the role of Julian carried the fashionable Broadway first nighters in silence to a world they rarely, one feels, explore. It was artistry of a high order, with the actor showing true greatness in his completely convincing simplicity.

He used superlatives to express his admiration for what he thought was a beautiful physical production, calling it 'exquisite' in
every respect, with the settings being elegant and grand.

Canadian audiences had enjoyed the work of the British Gielgud and the American Worth in their own theatres. Now Whittaker was telling Canadians in this review of Tiny Alice that Hutt, one of their own, was equal to the best foreign actors in the world on an international stage:

As Alice, Miss Worth is beautifully seductive, amusing (for this is not a solemn play) and poignant. Hutt, bearing the play's argument much of the time, has equal stature. He is cruel, cool and, in a love scene with Miss Worth for which I cannot account symbolically, terrifying.

Whittaker was suggesting to Canadians that because their theatre, which was steadily developing its own style, was doing as well as any in the world, they, as audience members, should be open to the diversity of the contemporary theatre that was being made available to them at home.

By the beginning of 1965, Canada was already looking forward to its centennial year celebrations and Whittaker saw the occasion as a focal point for important developments in the Canadian theatre. He hoped that a number of theatres would be built to provide "more places in which Canadians can share the communal excitement that theatre offers." With the Dominion Drama Festival of 1967 committed to only accepting plays written by Canadians playwrights, and with "a chain of Canadian theatres exchanging plays written by Canadians," he hoped that "Canada might have something to say, theatrically, to the rest of the world." Again, Whittaker cited the successful trip of the Stratford Festival company to Chichester as proof that this had
already been accomplished. He believed that if this trend continued, then Canadian theatre companies would "find that they have a style and a character of their own, something difficult to grasp while they continue to play to native audiences at home."

Whittaker took stock of Canada's theatrical assets. Edwin Mirvish had become the new owner of the Royal Alexandra. Although Whittaker was relieved that it had escaped the fate of Her Majesty's Theatre in Montreal, he was skeptical of Mirvish's intention to emphasize the staging of musicals. He said that there should be a place in the Royal Alexandra season for the occasional, smaller musical, but the Royal Alexandra must be treasured, like Massey Hall, as the ideal house for a special purpose. As a legitimate theatre it as perfect as the O'Keefe is imperfect. Let it remain so.

In April, 1965, Whittaker wrote an article about Michel St. Denis, "the most inspiring of the adjudicators in the finals of the Dominion Drama Festival." He thought that with St. Denis, Canada could boast of having someone "revered as an expert in [the] classic theatre of both France and England," who had made a substantial contribution to the development of the Canadian theatre, as one of its natives. The National Theatre School could ensure that the country had a steady supply of trained personnel for its theatre. In a few short years, the school had already been a part of the rise of Stratford to international stature. Whittaker was not entirely comfortable with the artistic possibilities provided by Stratford, though. While it was apparent that it was an excellent theatre for actors, Whittaker said in an article called "Stage Designer, Theatre's Step-child", published in Canadian Art
magazine in mid-1965, "that this Stratford stage is hard to design for (and to direct for) is now widely recognized." The problem was with the thrust design which allowed little scope for scenic creation. Whittaker pointed out that the stage's "most successful users are those who leave it to the actors." He said that as a result, "Stratford sets its stage by costumes" and primarily "is used for what we once classed as 'costume plays'."

The thrust stage design had been widely used in new theatres in Canada largely because of the success of Stratford and this did not bode well for Canadian designers. Whittaker cautioned that this stubbornness of the Stratford stage must be remembered when our new buildings for the Centennial are being planned. We do not wish to see all Canadian theatre condemned to perform on formal thrust stages. If each new theatre is another variation on Stratford, the scenic artist will finally give up and leave theatrical design in the hands of the property masters, nodding in only when a costume drama is being projected. 215

In 1965, Whittaker was not very optimistic about the future prospects for Canadian designers. He said that the designer "has such a thin time of it with the legitimate stage, that all he can hope for is that large-scale ballet and opera may suddenly flourish in the land." Whittaker gave the impression in this article that an era in the theatre was coming to an end, and it was and he said that

if the Canadian artist still longs to become part of the splendid world of stage design of the past, he had better get himself a Canada Council grant and head for such old-fashioned centres of the scenic art as Broadway, the West End of London or the state repertory theatres of Europe, never to return. 217

With Stratford, Canada had established a standard of
performance that was as good or better as any in the world. However, the time had passed when directors and designers could work extensively in theatres in Canada in traditional ways. Increasingly, theatre artists looked to alternate stages for creative opportunities and Canada could provide those opportunities. It was John Herbert's Fortune and Men's Eyes, produced off-Broadway at the Actor's Playhouse in March, 1967, that presaged the fact that the new Canadian theatre would be alternate theatre. Herbert had been one of Dora Mavor Moore's pupils in her New Play Society School for Drama. Although a number of his plays had been staged in Toronto,

no one in Toronto...would risk production of the play he wrote in 1964 about his experience of homosexual victimization in the Guelph Institute for young offenders where he had served a six-month sentence in 1946. 218

Whittaker reviewed the production at the Actor's Playhouse and remarked that "if success in Canadian theatre continues to be measured by United States recognition, the Toronto playwright may find his purposes best served by the taut, lively production Mitchell Nestor has directed here." 219 It is clear from Whittaker's review that he found the play tedious and lacking in complexity. "In his single-minded pursuit of this face of evil, the Toronto playwright discards all other aspects of prison corruption," he said. He remarked positively on the craftsmanship in the play, however, indicating that "Herbert has also written a tight piece of theatrical construction and characters in which actors can immerse themselves." 221 It had been sixteen years since the production of Tit-Coq had received such a
poor reception on Broadway. Whittaker was indicating that with the acceptance of this play in the United States, Canadian audiences could now feel confident about supporting their playwrights at home.
Notes


74 Roux, The School 12.


81 Roux, The School 16.


105 Herbert Whittaker, personal interview 1993.
This information was related to me by Ronald Bryden in 1996.


Benson and Conolly, The Oxford Companion 368.
Benson and Conolly, The Oxford Companion 577.
When I interviewed Whittaker in 1993, he told me that while he made his living as a critic, he thought of himself as an artist (designer). His perspective on the Stratford Festival theatre in this article reveals his artistic passion.
217 Whittaker, "Stage-designer" 46.
218 Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 117.
219 Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 117.
220 Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 118.
221 Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 118.
Chapter 5
New Canadian Theatre, 1967-1975

In his July 1, 1967 column in the Globe, Whittaker discussed the living theatre in Canada in the context of growth and development. He said that due to the various factors which have shaped our theatrical history, "we have the assurance that Canada will continue to produce talents that deserve expression in the theatre." International standards had been met on a number of fronts and with the National Theatre School, Stratford, and several professional regional theatres in place, there seemed to be assurance that Canada would continue to meet those standards. To return to Ronald Bryden's definition of the Canadian theatre, though, while Canadian actors were able to perform in professional Canadian theatres by Canada's centennial year, they were not yet primarily performing Canadian plays. While Whittaker stressed to his readers that they should support their dramatists, it had become clear to him by this time that new Canadian plays were not always staged to advantage in mainstream legitimate theatres. In fact, the new Canadian theatre was mainly alternative theatre and the product of untrained personnel. Whittaker had to judge it in this light. The excitement of British theatre after John Osborne lay in its disaffection and subversiveness, which were not qualities that Whittaker dared urge for the Canadian theatre. Therefore, when Canadian playwriting emerged after 1967, he was torn, not only by the lack of professionalism, but also the absence of great occasions for all the family.

In an article in the Globe in July, 1967, he used the example
of Tennessee Williams to instruct Canadian readers to "watch and learn from the way the other half of North America treats its playwrights." He made it clear that despite Williams' unconventional personal life and even the "deliberate sensationalism" of his plays, his work was high in merit:

His gift of theatricality, as demonstrated in his choice of dramatic action; his ability to create characters, particularly to create America's neurotic New Woman, and the fluid imagery of his dialogue, exploiting his heritage of Southern speech, backed up that sensationalism solidly. Whittaker's observations indicate Williams' ability to be at once an individualist, a highly skilled dramatist, and a distinctively American writer. Whittaker was not the first critic to suggest that Canadian writing might seek the same sort of niche in the North American literary world as the postwar Southern writers (Williams, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Connor). The phrase "Canadian Gothic", derived from Southern Gothic, was bandied about, and was applied particularly to Reaney.

Whittaker then posed a hypothetical question about the Canadian dramatist in this July, 1967 article: "Suppose his plays aren't any more flattering to Canada than Williams' plays have been to the United States?" He explained that like Williams, a playwright can be "a mud-disturber, a misfit, a poet and a contributor of great worth to the society in which he lives." Whittaker had developed a broader, less emotional view of Williams' plays since reviewing Cat on a Hot Tin Roof. The Broadway production of Fortune and Men's Eyes may have had something to do with Whittaker's appreciation of Williams' artistry.
In "Stage Designer, Theatre's Step-child", Whittaker referred to John Hirsch as a director "with a strong visual sense, which guarantees a high standard for his theatre," which was the Manitoba Theatre Centre. In July, 1967, James Reaney's *Colours in the Dark*, directed by Hirsch, was staged at the Stratford Festival's Avon Theatre. Whittaker made it clear in his review that this was an ideal situation in the Canadian theatre. "Would it not be remarkable," said Whittaker, "if Stratford were to be remembered in Canada's life for a poet of its own, and I don't mean William Shakespeare?" Reaney, a native of Stratford, had been developing his playwriting skills for a decade, and the audience at the Avon 'saluted' his achievement. In comparing Reaney to Shakespeare, Whittaker encouraged his readers to see this example of new Canadian theatre in the light of the international standard set by Stratford. The script was not only innovative but also it illustrated Reaney's "gift of the macabre" that Whittaker enjoyed so much. As he had always done with a new Canadian play, Whittaker studied the artistry in *Colours in the Dark* in order to assess its merit. He saw an improvement in Reaney's craftsmanship and said that

with greater theatrical skill than he has previously shown, Reaney arranges a confrontation between the Hero, as baby-sitter, and a thalidomide victim. 11

At the same time, Whittaker thought that the success of this production had a great deal to do with Hirsch's contribution. He recognized that in Hirsch,

poet Reaney has found a director with sympathy and imagination to match his work with great affection, simplicity and, above
Hirsch had enhanced Reaney's vivid images theatrically and had ensured that in production the play was not aesthetically lacking in any way. Whittaker was impressed by the design work:

The Avon back wall is divided, Expo-fashion, into four screens, on which are projected a variety of images, the sensitive work of Eoin Sprott - some abstract, some traditional, a few letters, an occasional photograph. These are beautifully integrated into the action.... Robert Reinholdt's lighting, incidentally, is immensely discreet and effective.

While the Stratford audience had undeniably been partial to Reaney, the contributions of artistry and craftsmanship by Hirsch, Sprott and Reinholdt were crucial to the positive reception of the play.

Whittaker used critical sleight of hand to praise *Colours in the Dark* as an ensemble production without any star roles. He listed the names of several of the actors, most of them notable Canadians, but he said that "so successfully have poet, director, designer and actors worked here that there is no space for a list of individual performances." Whittaker would have welcomed any Canadian play of the calibre of *Colours in the Dark* onto Stratford's Avon Theatre stage and celebrated fine ensemble productions he was witness to. He would even have liked to reunite Canadians as one majority audience again, but even in the case of this production he felt he had to tell his readers that it was untraditional: "Reaney's work will have many different appeals to many different people, and many appeals for the same people on different occasions."

Whittaker knew how long the process of development could be
for a playwright and how much theatrical assistance was required to facilitate that development. As a critic, he was committed to encouraging that development and during these last years of his career at the *Globe*, he made two kinds of criticism of new Canadian plays, although at times he appeared to fuse them into one. He criticized works which showed a lack of craft - the creators did not have the skills to say what they wanted to say effectively; and he criticized works which showed that the creators did not know what they wanted to say - there was no governing idea to give their statement form. [I am using the term 'creators' to cover the works which were "collective creations" in which a playwright in the traditional sense was not always involved.] This was particularly important when Whittaker was criticizing new Canadian work which wanted to say something about Canadian identity.

In 1968, Whittaker reviewed the London Little Theatre's production of Robert Gurik's *Hamlet, Prince of Quebec*, translated by Marc Gélinas. Whittaker detected a lack of clear, decisive thought in Gurik and used the second kind of criticism outlined above as the basis for his review. In the play, prominent figures from Quebec's political history are matched up with characters from Shakespeare's play. For example, Trudeau is matched with Laertes, Pearson is matched with Polonius, and De Gaulle with the Ghost. Quebec is matched with Hamlet and the 'English' are matched with the King [Claudius]. *Hamlet, Prince of Quebec* is a parody and parody by its nature muddies meaning - it makes fun of its object, but implicitly steals its qualities. As a parody, the play is
cleverly crafted. Whittaker recognized this but emphasized that the play confused and frustrated the audience:

The dazzle of cross-references did keep the LLT first-nighters hopping, sometimes not so happily. It was rather like trying to read Alice in Wonderland for its political significance by flashes of lightning. 17

While Gurik uses parody cleverly, his comparisons with characters from *Hamlet* are given little significance beyond a surface level of meaning and the dialogue adds up to a series of political statements. *Hamlet/Quebec* urges the Queen/The Church to "not sow upon this ranken soil a new allegiance which will not hold." His dying words are:

To eat...sleep...die...and never a day to dream...and never one to laugh. Who...who...will pluck us from this muddy dirt of compromises, who will break these chains which we ourselves hypocritically have forged. My death must serve those who follow on. For it must...must live... 'Vive the Quebec Libre'. 19

Whittaker addressed the question of the political implications of the play by saying simply that it was dated, and that this was an inherent problem with the genre of political satire. He defused the political energy of the play by reinforcing this sense of datedness, thereby saying that Quebecers' idea of their identity as Canadians was also dated:

But by now bilingualism and biculturalism have lost most of their humorous aspect, even in Quebec, which always thought it a bigger joke than did the rest of the country. 20

Whittaker thought that the play lacked a strong governing idea to give it form. Again, he referred to the effect of the play on the audience to make his criticisms:

So far the WASP audience was busier than any beaver trying to fit Gurik's analogies to the near-Shakespearean
text.... The stunning setting by Ed Kotenan and Jack King, itself a parody of Stratford's stage, keeps nudging us with another question: how would these actors be in the real thing? 21

Whittaker's use of the phrase "real thing" implies that the great form of Hamlet showed up the lack of clear, decisive thought in Gurik. As a result, Whittaker was much more strongly oriented, critically, towards the original Shakespearean text than towards Quebec politics. He noticed specifically that the phrase "To be or not to be free" evoked quite powerfully in the English-speaking audience a consciousness of the original play which effected a departure from the spirit of Gurik's play. Clearly, Gurik wanted to make a statement about Canadian identity in Hamlet, Prince of Quebec but he fell back on old clichés to do it. In effect, Whittaker told Gurik that his sense of identity was rooted in an old, separatist ideology, which was out of touch with the truly bilingual, bicultural Canada promised by Pierre Trudeau.

Whittaker's comparison of Colours in the Dark to Shakespeare's dramas helped emphasize his view that Reaney's writing was strong. His comparison of Hamlet, Prince of Quebec to Hamlet showed the weaknesses in Gurik's work. In this, we also see another imaginative key to Whittaker's criticism. Canadians had excelled theatrically in productions of Shakespearean texts. Now Whittaker saw Shakespearean influence in new Canadian plays. (Fortune and Men's Eyes featured a prisoner who quoted from Shakespeare.) Whittaker used Canadians' familiarity with Shakespearean texts to make useful criticism of new plays.

Whittaker did not limit his use of this critical technique to
new works inspired by Shakespearean texts. In December, 1969, for example, he reviewed a production of a work called Dionysus in '69. It was staged in "an old Orange Hall on east Queen Street," which had been converted into the Studio Lab Theatre. This theatre had previously been occupied mainly by the plays for children for which the company had been formed by Ernest J. Schwartz, an American teacher of acting at the Ryerson Polytechnic Institute. 24

Dionysus in '69 was an adaptation of Euripides' The Bacchae by another American, Richard Schechner. As with Hamlet, Prince of Quebec, Whittaker spent much of his time in the review making comparisons to the original play. He explained that

The Bacchae appeals to Ernest J. Schwartz, the Lab's director, because it is about a tribal society and concerns the breakdown of 'a structured, segmented point of view, in which one man's individuality is to be cherished over any sense of community.' 25

As a general idea, this was appropriate for the 1960s in North America and had excellent potential for contemporary theatrical expression. Whittaker rejected Dionysus in '69, however, because it was apparent to him that Schechner and Schwartz were really only interested in exploiting The Bacchae for sensational theatrical effects. He said that the play

allows for orgies, blood, audience participation, nudity and fellatio. The last takes place, in the Greek tradition, offstage, but everything else is offered in the middle of a pipe-and-platform amphitheatre, dimmed discreetly when the action gets interesting. 26

Whittaker was unimpressed by the adaptation and by the play's staging but what he objected to most strenuously was the unskilled performances. He pointed out, for example, that in the scene in The
Bacchae where Agave realizes that the head she is holding is that of her son,

Katina Paxinou recoils a full thirty feet when she plays this, and her Greek audience almost as far. The Studio Lab Agave, Ellen Beauchamp, seemed comparatively undisturbed, and with reason. She was not identified as playing the role, so why should she bother, if the audience thought she was just one of the chorus? 27

Whittaker suggested strongly in this review that Schechner and Schwartz had read Euripides' text poorly. He gave a number of examples where the masterful theatricality written into the text of The Bacchae made Dionysus in '69 look theatrically weak by comparison. "Being an expert dramatist," he said, "Euripides knew that unidentified horrors are always the most chilling. But the team of Schechner and Schwartz prefer to show us what the Bacchae are up to and it turns out to be merely another love-in, not even exclusive." 28 The end result of their unskilled treatment of a classic text was that the actor's art was lost altogether. Whittaker concluded by pointing out that

the Studio Lab actors don't act, but are content to hum a little, walk around a bit, chat earnestly with the audience, lead them in mild dancing and roll about on the floor. 29

While the theatrical power of The Bacchae revealed the weakness of Dionysus in '69, the production was historically important to the development of the Canadian theatre. Ronald Bryden points out that

in the anarchic spirit of the time, the group dissolved after its success, but its discovery of a new audience for contemporary work of the off-off-Broadway kind paved the way for the flowering in the early 70s of 'alternative' theatre across Canada. 30

In January, 1970, Whittaker reviewed a production of Tom
Hendry's *Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass* at Toronto's Central Players Theatre. Hendry wrote the play in 1963-64, and by the time Whittaker reviewed the 1970 production, scenes from it had been performed on CBC television. While Whittaker found authenticity in "the Canadian speech of the day" and was convinced of the accuracy of time and place in the war-time Winnipeg setting, he thought that the play was generally poorly crafted and its construction uneven.

Hendry said of his protagonist, Alec McNabb, "Alec's problem is that he doesn't know how to dream constructively at all." Whittaker found this dramatically truthful and remarked that Alec's "indecision is perhaps the only quality that adds relevance" to the play. However, he objected to Alec's outdated attitudes, presented in a tedious narrative structure. "Scene follows scene in laborious fashion," said Whittaker, "and points are made and remade just as they used to be." However, Whittaker found truth in the character of Peggy, Alec's sister. The scenes he judged as best in the play were those in which Peggy both deflated Alec's idealization of her husband Lenny (who was killed in action) and also persuaded her brother to centre his plans for the future on a practical career as an engineer rather than dreaming of becoming a pilot or movie actor.

The text of *Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass* called for the stage to be divided into a number of playing areas, including the living room of the McNabb home, Alec's bedroom, the neighbourhood garage, and a general area which suggests various locales by the changing
of props. Where the director and set designer may have helped integrate the settings and contributed to more effective communication, Whittaker found the "direction, like the set design...overly cautious and conventional."

Only in the final scene of the first act did Whittaker find the character of Alec affecting. In this scene, the McNabb family is gathered in the living room preparing a welcome home party for the older son. Here, Alec threatens to leave home if the family continues to treat his dream of becoming a pilot with disrespect. "In [this scene]," says Whittaker, "his big hope of glory explodes, and we ache for him." Whittaker complained of formlessness in Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass because he saw no controlling idea at work. Hendry may have thought he was writing a play about identity, but Whittaker saw him as just playing show-and-tell with his adolescence, making no statement about his experience or himself.

It was in the work of Toronto's Theatre Passe Muraille that Whittaker discovered clearly-expressed ideas and saw them finding relevant form in the post-centennial era. He identified Theatre Passe Muraille as "the first of Toronto's underground theatres." and followed the progress of the group from its inception at Rochdale College in 1969. In March of that year, he reviewed their production of Futz by Rochelle Owens at the Central Library Theatre, the first public showing of the group. He determined that the group drew "its inspiration from New York's Living Theatre" and remarked that

after some exploration of the New York style and methods, the Rochdale group has settled on this Owens script about a man
who loves a sow, and the effect of their affair on the community. 39

The subject matter was deliberately shocking but Whittaker detected a form which shaped the production elements. He commented on how the audience members were "nudged towards the concerns of the evening" in an intermission at the beginning of the play which included cross-talk, songs, recitations and slides "from Walt Disney's Three Little Pigs" and ones which included "views of a pig's rear." Whittaker thought that this was "highly individual" and "good humoured" but recognized the underlying purpose. "And always," he said, "there are these bright, young faces, eager to break down your inhibitions."

Whittaker commented that there was a distinct plot line in Futz which was preceded by a dramatic recitation. He identified Sy Futz as "our hero...a fairly Mediaeval type and rather narrow in his views." Futz (however obscenely) was depicted as coming to terms with his views and acting on his desires with the consequence of being imprisoned, "dreaming of his lost love, the sow." The form in which the play was written facilitated the depiction of Futz's quest and demise. Whittaker commented that the actors' performance is the focus of a quite intricate production, involving complicated lighting and tape recordings made by the company. Setting and costumes are well related to the overall concept.

The combination of a text with some traditional shape, yet with clever innovations and complex, well-orchestrated production elements, led Whittaker to conclude that in Futz, "Owens has written a tragic folk play, even if it is one meant to be played
impudently."

Whittaker thought that despite the obscenity in the production, Theatre Passe Muraille's beginning as a company was 'impressive' and he hoped there would be more 'experimentation' from them in the future.

With this production of Futz, Whittaker saw that the new work had begun to acquire some craft and professionalism. He recognized skill in a Canadian play when he reviewed the Factory Theatre Lab's production of Esker Mike and His Wife Agiluk by Herschel Hardin, in June, 1971. The Factory Theatre Lab was another Toronto theatre that Whittaker referred to as an 'underground' theatre. It was situated in the basement of an ice factory and Ken Gass was its director. Gass and William Glassco gave staged readings of short works by new playwrights. Whittaker referred to these as "playwright's showcase workshops." The audience members were then invited to ask questions and give impressions. Whittaker found "the analytical process" much in evidence there. This workshop process revealed the craftsmanship of playwrights and actors alike.

Whittaker explained in his review of Esker Mike and His Wife Agiluk that this was the Vancouver dramatist's first production after ten years of writing. It justifies that struggle handsomely. Hardin knows how to shape a work for the stage without apparent recourse to any cunning armature. Because of its subject, one is reminded of Eskimo sculpture, in which the animal or figure within the living stone is released by the carver. Out of the hardships of Northern life, Hardin has released a drama of inevitability and strength.

point in the Canadian theatre. Hardin had written a drama with a strong story line built around "the refusal of Agiluk to bear her
ninth child to the shiftless white trapper Esker Mike." The Factory Theatre Lab's production had done justice to the strong script and Whittaker recognized the merits of their approach:

One of the great advantages of Maruti Achanta's production is that he lets nothing and nobody compete with the playwright. There is the floor, there is the wall and there is the play. The audiences are placed so as not be in the way of the play, and so are the actors. But within this firm disposition, Achanta is able to provide some very helpful and sensitive playing.

Both the playwright and the practitioners at the Factory Theatre Lab exhibited a high degree of craftsmanship in the production of *Esker Mike and His Wife Agiluk* and Whittaker recognized this. He saw this trend continue in the Canadian theatre and when he reviewed the Vancouver Playhouse's production of David French's *Leaving Home* in 1973, he concluded that it "makes a very good candidate for the new category of national play." He premised this on a belief that staging the play in British Columbia reminded the people of that province "how similar human relations can be from sea to sea." *Leaving Home* had been premiered a year and half earlier at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto. Whittaker compared the "full staging" given to the play on the larger stage in Vancouver to the "intimate showing" of its premiere on the smaller Tarragon stage. *Leaving Home* is about people from Newfoundland. Whittaker found dramatic relevance to Canadians in the dramatic tensions vented in the family home in French's play, as he had found in Hendry's play. While he found the setting for the Vancouver production of *Leaving Home* "rather big and busy," this setting did serve to draw into focus the tensions in the
Mercer family in the same way that the living room of the McNabb home drew theirs into focus in *Fifteen Miles of Broken Glass*. Whittaker thought, however, that French's play was dramatically stronger than Hendry's. He said that:

French's play, sparked with that rough Newfoundland talk as well as Newfie prudishness and prejudice, opens into a strong situation. Does the seventeen-year-old son go through with the necessary marriage, when the girl has had a miscarriage? 63

Even with its strong story line, it was the performance of Kate Reid as Mrs. Mercer who, in much the same way she had done in *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf?*, gave shape to the play. Whittaker said that:

with Kate Reid fighting Mrs. Mercer's quiet battle for the love of her sons, the father's role is seen in a different perspective. French's autobiographical drama acquires a new maturity. 64

Whittaker saw that through "strong emotional playing," Reid turned Mary into "an opponent of equal weight in the ring [to Jacob]" and also a mother well able to communicate her love for her sons. At the same time, Reid was subtle and showed sensitivity. "The scene with which she closes the play, an explanation of why she married Jacob Mercer," said Whittaker, "is beautifully handled." 65 Whittaker was impressed by the way in which Reid handled her role in *Leaving Home*, giving clarity to the family conflict and truthfulness and relevance to this form of drama (qualities he found lacking in the production at Tarragon). The result was that she made the drama more accessible to a Canadian audience. "What had seemed a rare example of the old-fashioned domestic drama at Tarragon," he remarked, "seems more commonplace
While Whittaker found contemporary relevance in Canadian domestic drama and had been impressed by the transforming effect Kate Reid had on *Leaving Home*, he nonetheless found the forms in which these dramas were presented old-fashioned. In 1971, Whittaker wrote a paper about the contemporary playwright to open a lecture series for the Central Ontario Drama League. He never delivered the paper because of illness but it is included in the Whittaker fonds at York University. He began the paper by saying:

> When the Central Ontario Drama League discussed with me - as an honorary member - its hopes for this lecture series, the talk turned quite naturally to the interpretation of the contemporary playwright to his audience. I think at no time in the history of the theatre has that need been felt by so many people.

> This is not to place the stigma of obscurantism upon the playwright, but rather to say that any modern, sensitive man who attempts to bring to the stage the conflicts and changes he faces in everyday existence, is bound to use forms of expression that are not traditional but fit our age. New confrontations, new interpretations, new language floods through our theatre in this attempt to be true to the writers' emotional responses.

In the Canadian theatre in the early 1970s, Whittaker saw Theatre Passe Muraille working with a new form of expression, the collective creation. Through it, they were able to generate ideas about Canadian identity, and communicate them clearly and with truthfulness and relevance to Canadian audiences. In 1972, the members of Theatre Passe Muraille "visited a farming community near Clinton, Ontario," and created *The Farm Show*. It was composed of two acts with ten scenes in each act. The scenes, created by the members of the company after meeting and spending time with people in the community, depicted those people in various facets of their
daily lives. The first performance was in a barn owned by a local farmer and the members of the audience sat on hay bales. Because of its quality and relevance to Canadians, this became one of the most important works of new Canadian theatre in the post-centennial era.

The proposed demolition of Number 11 Trinity Square (a church in downtown Toronto which provided Theatre Passe Muraille with its main playing space), prompted an article by Whittaker in October, 1972, in which he confirmed that Theatre Passe Muraille would survive "because its purpose is strong and its policies pure." In the article he discussed the fact that Paul Thompson's original intention with the group had been to explore populist drama, or as Whittaker put it, "to stage plays to make the lower-class people the heroes." Whittaker, having seen how effective their work had been, fully supported them. He outlined that the success Thompson had achieved thus far lay

in the confidence good actors have in coming to Passe Muraille, and in its ability to attract directors, designers and even dramatists with fresh ideas. "That's what Theatre Passe Muraille is all about," he observed, "fresh ideas." For all its non-conformity, Theatre Passe-Muraille conformed to Whittaker's understanding of one of the processes by which theatrical art was produced. The company was pursuing art for art's sake in the same way he had done as a director and designer for decades. For Whittaker, continuity in the theatre was effected not only by opening a national theatre school to train the art but by the influx of new ideas which stimulated experimentation with new theatrical forms of expression.
Several months after this article about Theatre Passe Muraille was published, Whittaker interviewed Paul Thompson as the group was preparing to tour The Farm Show in smaller Ontario communities after its second run in Toronto. Thompson said that the tour was being undertaken in the name of "democratization for the arts" and his concern was for the people of these communities as audience. Thompson believed that because touring groups no longer visited the towns, and because of the advent of television, people no longer went to the theatre. In the tradition of touring, Thompson intended to take theatre to them and he emphasized that there was "an element of nationalism" in the enterprise because The Farm Show was "about us."

Touring a show "about us", nationally, was exactly what Whittaker had promoted for Robertson Davies' Fortune, My Foe almost a quarter of a century earlier. In May, 1973, to end their tour, Theatre Passe Muraille performed The Farm Show at the Stratford Festival Theatre and Whittaker gave high praise to their production. He concentrated primarily on the audience's response in his review, remarking that they "approved the actors' examination of their lives." He noted that by that time the actors were "marvellously at one with their rural characters" and that he detected "mirror images in the audience," some of whom, "during the religion sequence...were seen to pray." "All this," he said, "because the material is treated with respect and dignity." He emphasized the "remarkable communication" established by some of the monologues and concluded by saying that The Farm Show was "too
valuable to die."

The National Arts Centre opened in Ottawa in 1970 and Whittaker was pleased that _The Farm Show_ was scheduled to be staged there in 1973, at end of the summer. In an article about the history of theatre in Canada, published in _The Encyclopedia Americana_, Whittaker put the Arts Centre into perspective nationally:

> Emulating the British acceptance of cultural subsidy by setting up the Canada Council (through the Massey Report, 1951) and other bodies, the country began to develop regional theatres, each serving large areas. The exchange between these was encouraged by the Centennial Commission, established to celebrate the 100th anniversary of Confederation in 1967. It was planned that such exchanges would be regularized by 1970 with the opening of the National Arts Centre in Ottawa. 85

Whittaker's notion of a national theatre was beginning to take shape. The strong communication achieved between actors and audiences in all of these post-centennial productions indicated that the new Canadian theatre was making relevant statements about identity to Canadians.

It is clear that by 1973, Whittaker recognized the quality of the new Canadian drama. When he reviewed _1837: The Farmer's Revolt_ in January, 1973, he noticed a marked increase in the level of artistic achievement in Theatre Passe Muraille's new collective creation, and his response was proportionately enthusiastic. Visually, he fully appreciated the production. Aesthetically, he judged the mimed talking head (formed by a number of the actors joining together in the shape of a head that talked) 'Lovely' and remarked that the "highly satisfying physical presentation" was
"another blessed characteristic of Thompson's production." He was particularly impressed by the set which he described as follows:

Against the high old brick walls of number 11 Trinity Square rise a quartet of tall trees made (ingeniously enough) of wood. The scent of new wood fills the playing space, for the aisles are washboarded, as well as those bridges linking the four playing platforms. Excellent lighting not only keeps the action flowing briskly but creates a number of moments of real theatrical beauty. 88

It was evident that the production was aesthetically pleasing. With the set and action integrated so well, Theatre Passe Muraille was displaying a high level of craftsmanship in design and direction.

In a change from the production of The Farm Show, a playwright (Rick Salutin) contributed to this production. Whittaker presumed 89 that Salutin was "responsible for the driving reportage" in the play but he was ultimately able to differentiate quite clearly between the contributions made by the playwright and those made by the actors. This indicated a lack of synthesis between elements, caused by the fact that the script was full of historical facts and details. The form of the collective creation, at least in so far as Theatre Passe Muraille used it, allowed the actors to effectively explore their craft. "The first half, one gathers," said Whittaker, "contains more of the actors' own contributions, the sequences being marked by a certain actable quality." 90 At the same time, Salutin's influence on the script placed demands on the actors to participate in the production in more traditional ways. Whittaker noticed that while Thompson as director, "encouraged his actors to
deploy all their theatre games to keep this material from sounding much like those earnest CBC chronicles heard on CBC radio still, the Passe Muraille performers did demonstrate an ability to perform conventional impersonations. He said that a
delight is the vaudeville act put on by Clare Coulter and David Fox, with Fox as the British ventriloquist, Coulter the Canadian dummy. A more sustained impersonation is that of author Robert Davis, by Janet Amos, recounting his discovery of the paradise across the U.S. border and his return to this earth, to die in the fighting in 1838.

Because the script had been produced by both a playwright and the collective creation process, it had a hybrid quality to it. It revealed not only that Salutin was still a developing playwright but also that the actors were limited in traditional acting skill. They were largely untrained and had not developed their theatrical skills in traditional ways. Whittaker pointed these things out when he said that "everybody does everything that comes to hand, without stooping to obvious impersonation."

The collective creation had proven itself an excellent form of expression for ideas and themes in the new Canadian theatre. Whittaker had always appreciated the "joyous, energetic creativity" which he said was typical of Theatre Passe Muraille. The production of 1837: The Farmer's Revolt made limitations in the form apparent to him, however. As a result, his enthusiasm for the inventiveness of the company was tempered by disappointment in the drama itself and in their general standard of performance which was not as high as he would have liked.

Prior to Whittaker's retirement from the Globe in 1975, the highest standard in new Canadian theatre was achieved by James
Reaney and the NDWT Company with their production of the Donnelly trilogy (Sticks and Stones, The St. Nicholas Hotel, Handcuffs). It was staged at the Tarragon Theatre at a rate of one play per year from 1973 to 1975. The Donnellys was the last major Canadian work Whittaker reviewed before his retirement and he believed that it was the greatest artistic achievement in the new Canadian theatre to date. In 1973, Whittaker sensed how important this work was. After seeing Sticks and Stones, he said that

it is an eerie but comforting feeling to have, when reviewing a current production, that you are really supplying a footnote to dramatic history, that your remarks may survive as 'a contemporary viewpoint.' 95

The Stratford Festival had originally commissioned Reaney, after the successful production of Colours in the Dark, to write a play to be produced in collaboration with John Hirsch. When Hirsch resigned from the Festival in 1969, however, Reaney turned to Keith Turnbull, a director with whom he had worked in summer theatre in London, Ontario. Turnbull, now in Halifax, tried it out with a group of actors and persuaded Reaney, instead of cutting his text, to turn it into three separate full-length plays. Whittaker described the process by which the form of expression used by Reaney was developed:

Recognizing a need to approach the theatre through some road other than French's Acting Edition, Reaney began the series of workshops through which he has found the method of playing suited to his style of poetic drama. It is one which supports the flowing verbal images with homely mimetic patterns. 96

In his review of Sticks and Stones, Whittaker said that Reaney assimilated

the legends surrounding the Donnelly family of Biddulph,
massacred by neighbours in 1880...[and] has shaped it and reshaped it into his own form of well-documented fantasy, relying heavily on Keith Turnbull to match his verbal images and to crystallize the Reaney vision. 97

When he reviewed the productions at the Tarragon theatre, Whittaker clearly identified Reaney's purpose, outlining how he was "consciously creating an epic of southwestern Ontario" and that he was "highly successful." From Sticks and Stones, the first play, Whittaker followed the progress of the family members as heroes, speculating that "by the end of the third play to come, the Donnellys may well emerge as a nation's heroes." Because of the strength of both Reaney's writing and Turnbull's direction, Whittaker saw the text and the theatrical elements brought closely and intensely together, resulting in "a great concentration of poetic and theatrical components." In each production, Whittaker looked to see how well-balanced these components were with one another and how well audience involvement and identification with the characters was facilitated.

In his review of The St. Nicholas Hotel, Whittaker remarked that "Turnbull's talent for inventive stage business matches his author's word-image." In all three of the plays, the actors doubled and redoubled to portray the many characters. Whittaker thought that in Sticks and Stones it was "the artistic triumph of Turnbull's production...that we seem to know all the Donnellys." He said that "the chameleon actors slip from personality to personality in a sequence of vivid scenes." In his review of The St. Nicholas Hotel, he emphasized how challenging the doubling and redoubling was for the actors. Whittaker said that
sometimes you may wonder which actor is playing what character, for the Reaney-Turnbull Method demands much nimbleness in doubling. You won't need to be told that the admirable Patricia Ludwick is again the heroic Donnelly matriarch but you might like to be reminded that she is also Mercilla Maguire; that burning Jerry Franken is both husband James and son William to her, and that David Ferry is now smiling wickedly as Mike Donnelly. 105

This only served to illustrate how effective Turnbull's directing was as he was able to give many of the characters "instant 106 identities" and provide the audience with the many 'riches' in Reaney's script.

In his review of Handcuffs, Whittaker again remarked on the effectiveness of the "collaboration between director and author, and between actors and director, which made its two predecessors so 108 stageworthy."

He stopped short of calling The Donnellys "an 109 Ontario classic to Canada's dramatic literature," however, because of Reaney's dependence on Turnbull. He said that

we are persuaded to make the hasty judgement, yet we are responding to Keith Turnbull's direction as much as to Reaney's folk-tragedy. Generally enmeshed, sometimes they seem unexpectedly at odds. Where Reaney is refusing to supply anything that might be mistaken for another melodramatic reconstruction of the massacre, Turnbull tends to dramatize the material more theatrically. 110

While Whittaker had seen Reaney develop his playwriting skills considerably over a decade and a half, the Donnelly script still needed assistance from the director and actors to make it theatrical. The general impression given by Whittaker in his reviews was that even when expanded into a trilogy, The Donnellys was busy and overcrowded, and the action unfocused at times. There was no doubt that he believed the productions were successful because of Turnbull's capacity for innovative direction and ability
to solve problems. Turnbull demonstrated this most convincingly in Handcuffs when he used a pair of white curtains to focus the action. Whittaker describes them as being introduced to conceal Mrs. O'Connor's bar (and used to good comic effect when the priest comes), they flow in and out of the action from that point forward, concealing and revealing. They become useful as shadow screens in revealing action which moves closer toward ritual, with music and dance. 111

Whittaker indicated in this passage that the action could have been more dramatic. He pointed out another problem with the drama when he said in his review of Handcuffs that it may come as a shock that Reaney has allowed the massacre to become something of an anticlimax, diffused by his poetic concern with this subsoil of Ontario legend. But we had been warned in The St. Nicholas Hotel, the second play, that the poet-dramatist was falling under the spell of the family. 112

Reaney's evident loss of objectivity about his material weakened his playwriting. Because of this and other problems he had seen in the scripts, Whittaker could not wholeheartedly proclaim it as achieved art.

A couple of outstanding performances in The Donnellys were high points in the Canadian theatre of the post-centennial era. "Patricia Ludwick," said Whittaker, "stands unmistakably heroic as Mrs. Donnelly, the actress rising to the admiration of the dramatist until the matriarch is pure legend." 113 David Ferry had begun the English acting course at the National Theatre School in 1970. Whittaker noticed his skill and said that Ferry "stands out again as the ideal representative junior Donnelly, his curling lip establishing the balance between Irish deviltry and pioneer generosity." 114 In general, however, The Donnellys fell short of
Whittaker's international standard of professionalism and despite
being impressed by the quality of the work, reservation on his part
was evident:

The collaboration of Reaney's imagery, born of his fascination
with all things pertaining to the Donnellys, and the invention
evoked from it by Turnbull's versatile and devoted actors
perhaps adds to the diffusion of the work. It certainly
extends the playing time. 115

Despite his enthusiasm for the inventiveness and creativity of
new Canadian plays and productions, Whittaker could not fully
support this new theatre. To do so, he would have had to believe it
was superior to art elsewhere. Also, he could not entirely welcome
the new Canadian theatre because he had his international standards
of professionalism. The theatre of the new movement in Canada in
the 1960s and 1970s was largely the product of untrained personnel.
Nonetheless, The Donnellys was a fine script, as good as anything
produced by a modern playwright.
Notes


16. Playwrights were involved in some collective creations.


19  Gurik, *Hamlet, Prince of Quebec* 53.


24  Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 137.

25  Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 137.


30  Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 137.


Bryden, Whittaker's Theatre 144.


Chapter 6
Conclusion

Whittaker's retirement from The Globe and Mail was announced in an article published in that paper on September 13, 1975. In the article, he discussed the times in which he began his writing career:

Canada had theatre - the theatre it deserved - but it didn't have its own drama. A nation has to have its own art, its own drama. This isn't nationalism but internationalism, which means giving as well as taking. We've been a borrowing nation too long. 1

This was the goal he had argued for throughout his career. In the 1960s, with the success of the Stratford Festival Company at Chichester and a production like Langham's Lear, Canada had achieved an international standard of performance. With the National Theatre School to ensure a steady supply of trained people for its theatres, Canada needed no longer be the borrower it had once been. The new, post-centennial Canadian drama did not meet Whittaker's international standards of professionalism but a script of the calibre of The Donnellys was a major national artistic achievement and the most Whittaker could have realistically hoped for.

When I interviewed Whittaker in 1993, he told me that he intended his Globe writing to comprise a chronicle of what he knew was an extremely important era in Canadian theatre history. While the Globe was unofficially acknowledged by management and readership in Whittaker's time as a politically conservative paper, it hired many liberal-minded reporters over the years and did not impose a political agenda on these writers. Whittaker began working
for the Globe during an era in which the arts were considered out of politics. Whittaker saw himself as a small 'l' liberal who had no political bias as an arts journalist. Personally, as Ronald Bryden points out, he was "a life-long liberal [and] had no aspirations to dictate opinion." Professionally, as Richard J. Doyle says, when Globe owner Howard Webster gave the necessary backing to publisher Oakley Dalgleish and the paper began to extend its circulation nationally,

the measure of changing times was the fact that political affiliation, at last, meant no more than denominational adherence in measuring the success of Canada's large-circulation dailies.

Neither did Whittaker ultimately champion a side in the Canadianism versus colonialism debate. Largely because of his double life, as someone both involved in and writing criticism about the living theatre, he took a middle path, reporting what he saw with the primary emphasis on quality.

Whittaker remained essentially an impressionistic critic throughout his career. This served him particularly well during the last few years he worked at the Globe. When I interviewed him in 1993, he said that as a theatre critic, he had to always somehow justify his space in the Globe. For most of his career, he had been able to do that by finding and reporting on a large volume of theatrical material. Not long before he retired in 1975, however, he had been pressured by his editor to play up sexiness in the theatre and stress its part in the 'liberation' movements of the 1960s and after, if he wanted space for his coverage of theatre.
In light of such pressure being put upon him by his editor, he had to accept that Canadians in general were not interested in theatre for its own sake.

How did Whittaker deal with this? To a certain extent, he had always written with this assumption in mind. His use of 'we' in reviews encouraged more readers to be friends of the theatre. However, this was just one element of a critical style he developed. In an article called "Herbert Whittaker: Insights of a Drama Critic", published in Scene Changes magazine in 1980, Deborah Sawyer quotes Whittaker as saying that in criticism "objectivity is impossible but the need to achieve objectivity is essential." Whittaker accepted this paradox as a reality of being a daily working critic for a newspaper. His longevity at the Globe is proof that he achieved objectivity in his criticism to a degree that satisfied his editors. At the same time, he was able to communicate enough of his own knowledge, ideas and feelings about the theatre to satisfy himself and his friends.

Because Whittaker felt that he could never count on his general readership finding theatrical excellence cause for excitement in itself, he found it necessary to blow patriotic trumpets for Canadian actors outside the country. In so doing, he achieved such things as helping to advance the image of Canada abroad, providing spiritual food for Canadians, and making Canadians feel one up on "the mother country" or the United States. At the same time, however, he never lost his concern for the survival of the theatre in Canada and maintained his belief that a
nation is not a nation without its own theatre. He dealt with changes such as the growth of the alternate theatre movement by presenting it as part of a general movement towards national 'self-reliance'. In an article called "The Alternate Theatre in Toronto", published in 1972, Whittaker charted the development of alternate theatre in the city, beginning with George Luscombe's productions, and included it as an integral part of the developing Canadian theatre. He said in this article that

the vision of a theatre that does not have to borrow its drama from abroad is startling to many Canadians even those who have been talking about it for years. 7

Whittaker also drew upon his own passions and the sources of inspiration that sustained them, and attempted to merge them with public interest and taste, to ensure the survival of the theatre in Canada and to encourage growth. He is able to trace his great affection for the stars of the theatrical world and interest in their lives and careers back to his earliest experiences in Montreal. He told Don Rubin that

since childhood, I had gathered the lore of the theatre from anybody I could find. Old people sitting on porches in Outremont would remember Henry Irving.... When it came to thinking of the particular plays of that period I was fascinated particularly by Sarah [Bernhardt]. And when I read the episode in which she had been mobbed in Montreal and audiences defied the Bishop of Montreal to attend her performances, I was determined to get a play written about this. 8

In Whittaker's Theatricals, Whittaker discusses details of Bernhardt's visit to Montreal in 1880 (obtained primarily from her autobiography, Memories of My Life, published in 1907) and says,

I believe the most flattering way to celebrate a visit by a great player is to write about it - granting that the occasion
provides sufficiently dramatic material.... Sure enough, her visit...lived up to her reputation fully. 9

When the facts of Bernhardt's visit 'inspired' Whittaker and his fellow members in the Sixteen-Thirty Club to invite their friend Janet Mcphee to write a play, the product, *Divinity in Montreal*, was not only testimony to Whittaker's love of stars and a desire to flatter them, but was an indication of how much he valued theatrical history and tradition. His love of history and tradition caused him to try to preserve Canadian theatrical heritage whenever possible. The inspiration he derived from great international stars gave him impetus to campaign to commemorate stars born in Canada with public monuments or their equivalents. For example, he campaigned for statues in Toronto of Mary Pickford and Beatrice Lillie, and succeeded when the actress Jane Mallett died in getting the St. Lawrence Centre's Town Hall renamed the Jane Mallett Theatre.

In 1982, Whittaker published an article in the *Globe* called "Banking on a Theatre Museum" in which he emphasized that Canada had a wealth of theatrical history. He argued that because the vacant Bank of Montreal building in Toronto was in such close proximity to the St. Lawrence and O'Keefe centres, it would be an ideal building for a Canadian theatre museum. In this article, he embraced past and present in Toronto's theatrical history and made a connection between foreign and Canadian stars. "As a still-surviving road town," he said, "Toronto alone has a particularly star-filled past before it gets to its own stars." He believed that a museum was essential if Canada's theatrical heritage was to
be remembered.

In the Whittaker documents at York University ("Herbert Whittaker Fonds"), there is a copy of the address Whittaker gave to open an exhibition of archives in the Theatre Department of Toronto's Metropolitan Library. He and Heather MacCallum, the department's head librarian, had worked together to establish the Canadian Theatre Museums Project which was sponsored by the Association of Canadian Theatre History (now the Association for Canadian Theatre Research). The exhibition celebrated twenty five years of collecting by the department and showcased Canadian archival material. In this address, Whittaker celebrated the fact that the library had collected so much valuable material. "When I see the imaginative work on the playbills of early Canadian touring, I see vivid examples of what a Canadian Theatre Museum needs," he said. "I hope when Toronto gets its museum, such talent will be available." The former Bank of Montreal building on Toronto's Front Street did not become a theatre museum. In 1993, it became the new home of the Hockey Hall of Fame and Whittaker expressed his disappointment to me. However, the collection of Canadian theatre archives of the Metropolitan Library continues to grow and preserve Canada's theatrical heritage.

In "Banking on a Theatre Museum", Whittaker said that comparatively, recent history could slip away if not captured soon. The city's heritage of stock companies - that First World War delight, The Dumbells, those original Spring Thaws, the New Play Society, Jupiter Theatre and the years of the Crest - could become forgotten links in the building of an indigenous stage. Whittaker was saying that as much as anything, a theatre museum
would tell the story of Canada's growing self-reliance or independence in theatrical matters. He had begun arguing for that independence before he began working at the Globe and, for the most part, it had always been synonymous with professionalism, ideally home-grown.

In 1946, he published an article called "Fridolin - Our Star" in which he charted Gratien Gélinas' path to professional success. Whittaker said that the name of Gélinas' famous character 'Fridolin'

is the name of an amateur, born in Canada and rising in Canada to become that most rare of all birds - a Canadian star, complete with a public, press agent, contracts, tours and, the thing which really convinces his fellow countrymen, an international reputation! Fridolin is the closest thing to a theatre that we have in Canada today. 15

Whittaker particularly liked Gélinas because he thought that as a performer he was "an artist of the first rank." He said that "his wit, satire and appreciation of fun are backed by a brilliant gift of theatre." What he thought was most remarkable about Gélinas was the fact that he had built his career from amateurism to professionalism entirely in Canada. He said that

Gratien Gélinas, the amateur, has both artistic and commercial success in the theatre, and he has done it without leaving home! It is incomprehensible that a Canadian can succeed in the theatre without appearing on Broadway, without making one trip to Hollywood, is it not? Incomprehensible, but not - it seems - impossible. Fridolin did it! 18

Whittaker's celebration of the fact that Gélinas had become a star in Canada was an early indication that he had a vision of a Canada that was theatrically independent. In an article called "The Theatre", published in 1957, Whittaker traces the decline of
touring theatre in Canada back to around 1910. He lists numerous "great figures of nineteenth-century theatre who appeared in Canada, and appeared regularly." These were stars who were part of "the road." "They were its chief glory," he says "and one of the first causes of its downfall." Whittaker explains that the primary reason for that was their large salaries. To compensate for those salaries, competent actors in the touring companies were replaced by less talented actors who were paid less. "The public started to recognize the difference," said Whittaker, "and the dramatic critics pointed them out, flattering the celebrities the while." In this same article, Whittaker points out that while this marked the beginning of the demise of foreign touring theatre in Canada, professionalism was kept alive by stock companies. However, the motion-picture industry eventually took its toll on them. Whittaker thought that Canadian stars who had successful careers at home could ensure the continuance of live professional theatre in Canada. An independent, professional Canadian theatre could follow.

In 1946, the success of Gélinas the performer and revue writer made the full realization of this vision seem possible. So too did the success of the Stratford Festival in the early 1950s make it seem possible. In an article called "Summer Theatre in Ontario", Whittaker said that the International Players in Kingston and the Peterborough Summer Theatre were so highly regarded...that this critic was convinced that from one or the other would emerge a major theatre festival. It came as a complete surprise when Stratford achieved that distinction. 23
Because of Gélinas' reputation, Whittaker promoted and fully supported him as an actor and playwright when *Tit-Coq* was staged in Toronto and New York in the early 1950s. When he saw *Bousille and the Just* at the Royal Alexandra Theatre in the 1960s, however, he was uncomfortable about the subject matter of the play and he saw Gélinas in a new light, as a playwright for the alternate theatre.

By the early 1970s, the theatre in Canada had changed considerably from what it had been when Whittaker began working at the Globe. Whittaker had followed those changes (marked primarily by the development of alternate theatre) and in "The Alternate Theatre in Toronto", he explained:

> When I wrote an article in *The Globe and Mail* last May, labelling the productions at the Royal Alexandra and O'Keefe Centre in Toronto as imports, a number of readers seemed surprised that the local scene had changed to the extent it had in the past decade. Yet the alternate theatre has gained sufficiently in power, support, and interest to establish a whole new perspective on Broadway or British entertainments. 24

Whittaker gave having "less to lose and lighter production burdens" than predecessors like the New Play Society, the Jupiter Theatre and the Crest, as reasons why the alternate theatres "have provided the figures in the foreground of this new perspective." 26 He also pointed out that "the underground theatre established itself most independently" but this was not a development in the Canadian theatre that he was as happy about as he had been about Gélinas' rise to stardom.

The "new perspective" to which Whittaker referred meant that while alternate theatre had come to the 'foreground', theatre from
Broadway and Britain in places like the Royal Alexandra still flourished. And while glad that Canada was no longer the borrowing nation it had been, Whittaker could not altogether recommend alternate theatre to his readers. He revealed his personal conflict in this article ("The Alternate Theatre in Toronto") when he commended subsidized groups such as the National Ballet of Canada, the Canadian Opera Company and the Toronto Symphony performing at the O'Keefe Centre, and praised the Royal Alexandra's recent production of the musical Godspell. He concluded that

the various subsidies reflect the interest and acceptance of a theatre which reflects Canada as a state of mind, rather than the state of any union. Self-reliance is touching our theatre on all fronts, from the underground up. 28

While acknowledging the self-reliance represented by alternate theatre as important, at the same time Whittaker supported the abovementioned theatres and performing arts groups and companies.

As has been discussed, Whittaker was inspired to develop his artistic talent and work as a designer in the theatre by international figures like Edward Gordon Craig and Robert Edmond Jones. In Quebec, he found his community in little theatres, summer theatres and churches. Indeed in "Canada - Theatre", Whittaker referred to "early Roman Catholic attempts to discourage this irreverent offspring of the church." He also talked about church domination of the theatre and the theatre's timeless "spiritual pretensions" in his July 1, 1967 article in the Globe. It is clear that there was a distinct association in his mind between the church and the theatre. This was confirmed when I interviewed him and he told me that as long as churches are not doing what they are
supposed to do, we need the living theatre. I sensed that he meant this primarily in relation to the function of art in society. He was saying to me that churches are supposed to draw people together and appeal to them as members of a community, and inspire them intellectually, emotionally and spiritually, thereby enriching the community. He evidently felt that the theatre had a better record of doing this in society than churches.

In the summer of 1996, I asked Jonathan Rittenhouse about his father Charles' friendship with Whittaker, specifically what he thought Whittaker learned from him. He told me that

Herbert had great respect for my father's enthusiastic personality, energy and directorial vision. He was one of Herbert's earliest friends and Herbert learned a lot of the doing of theatre from my father.... His relationship with Herbert, which developed in their early twenties, was the period in which both discovered and fully experienced their passion and talent for theatre. 31

Whittaker has never lost that passion for theatre and he has expressed it through his talent as a director and designer throughout his life. One of the most remarkable expressions of his creative talent was the design work he did for the 1961-62 tour of the Canadian Players. He designed sets and costumes for their production of King Lear. They were particularly interesting because Whittaker used the clothing and habitat of the Canadian Eskimo for inspiration. The idea to use an Eskimo theme was David Gardner's, who directed King Lear but the designs were Whittaker's creation. This was not the first time Whittaker had worked on King Lear. In 1946 and 1953, he designed productions in Montreal. By setting ancient Britain into an Eskimo context with such ingenuity and
clarity in 1961, Whittaker's designs helped Canadians identify with the play and sense that it and the heritage of literature and civilization that it was part of was also their heritage.

In "Insights of a Drama Critic", Sawyer says that Whittaker's own vision for drama in Canada is for a theatre that is a strengthening and clarifying element in society, one that would do more to help newcomers understand Canadians. Beyond that, he notes that a high degree of professionalism is now needed; the theatre's growth has been encouraged and it should now move on to a new phase. 33

Whittaker's vision was of a Canadian theatre that clearly expressed Canadian identity and at the same time had professional standards. His perspective on the theatre was not unchanging, however, and deeper than what often appeared on the surface in his Globe reviews and articles. He was open to new ideas and learned from both his practical work and his work as a critic. While he was a designer and often approached things from a visual perspective, he was also sensitive to voice and language. He illustrated this in a preface he wrote to an edition of plays by Robertson Davies which contained At My Heart's Core and Overlaid. He said of the characters in At My Heart's Core:

Speaking the language common to the year 1837, they help Davies convince us of the truth of his argument, which is that artists have to struggle to survive in our own time to give us our own literature.

Davies lets us know through this play that the struggle exists today as it did when the country was in its more formative state, and he does so obliquely, seeming to aim his direct accusation at past conditions. Here the conventions of past speech are of great aid. 34

In the paper he wrote in 1971 about the modern playwright for the lecture series sponsored by the Central Ontario Drama League, Whittaker discussed the way in which language changes
constantly in the theatre to reflect changing times. He recalled that when he first saw Beckett's *Waiting for Godot* in London, England in 1955, "I put it down as 'an intellectual vaudeville'." Admitting that he had little insight into the play at the time, he said, "Critics are not infallible." He remarked that language in our theatre has changed so fast that we forget the days when 'damn' and 'hell' were considered shocking.... Our drama, which depended on speaking the way people spoke in situations of high emotion, managed to keep a semblance of refinement. Now the secret is out, people have been using such words as 'shit' since Chaucer's time and not just when they hit themselves with a hammer. Whittaker then went on in this paper to explain that "Pinter is more regional in his speech" and "metropolitan in style," while "Beckett has a somewhat provincial or even peasant flavour to his writing." He summarized by saying, "My point here is that to enjoy Beckett and Pinter you must enjoy language, just as once you enjoyed the word-plays of Christopher Fry." In Canada, Whittaker enjoyed Reaney's masterful use of language in *The Donnellys* and recognized it as the best writing of that decade. A quarter of a century earlier, Whittaker indicated in "Our Theatre: A Youthful Bloom" that he was excited by the fact that theatres were included in new schools being built in Montreal. He argued throughout his career that more theatres like those should be built throughout Canada. Ironically, as Reaney explained in his account of the national tour of *The Donnellys, 14 Barrels from Sea to Sea*, the NDWT Company performed the trilogy in many such theatres to very small audiences. In 1980, in an article called "Phillips commands Statford to glory for his last hurrah,"
occasioned by Phillips' resignation as artistic director, Whittaker pointed out with assurance that "there is no danger that the Stratford Festival will collapse, in whichever direction it is led."

Whittaker's essentially impressionistic critical style enabled him to reflect what he experienced in the theatre through the mirror of his sensibility. He would make adjustments to accommodate new developments, or to satisfy his editors, by exaggerating or by using either superlatives or the plainest vocabulary possible. It is always clear in his writing, however, that he valued high standards of professionalism and artistic integrity and innovation in the theatre. To this day, that is what he values in the theatre. In June, 1996, he wrote an obituary article for The Globe and Mail about Robert Christie which he began by claiming that Christie's career could be seen as a history of professional theatre in Canada. He charted Christie's career from involvement in the Dominion Drama Festival and early summer theatre through to the Stratford Festival and early radio and television in Canada. He also emphasized that Christie found repertory theatre employment in England and, after returning home at the onset of World War II, fought with Revenue Canada for actors' self-employment status and helped establish Actors Equity in Canada. Christie represented an ideal of involvement that Whittaker still holds onto. On top of that, Whittaker says of Christie that

a major element of his contribution to his profession was the respect and affection accorded him by his colleagues - of major importance in a world of uncertainty and risk. 41
Whittaker has also continued to direct and design amateur theatre productions. In November, 1991, he began auditions for a production of *Everyman* at Northside United Church in Seaforth, Ontario. His notes to those involved in the production reveal that he had maintained his strong design principles:

The main characteristic of this production design for Northside United Church is simplicity, with speech and performance kept this side of the theatrical, save for the players doing Goods and Demon. It is to be played in very soft light, with only a few shadow-effects to heighten the dramatic content. No processions, no pageantry, only the simplest of props, and costuming down to the basic minimum needed to support the mediaeval origins of this old moral play. 42

In the lecture he wrote in 1971 for the Central Ontario Drama League, he said that theatre history sometimes seems like an endless ladder, with each new creation carrying us up and away from yesterday's established successes.... One gets a great deal more out of modern theatre if one climbs with it, and looks for the excitement instead of counting the differences in the new plays compared with the ones you had comfortably learned to appreciate and don't wish to reject for old times sake. 43

Whittaker's long-term importance is as a chronicler of an important period in Canadian theatre history. He has always cared about traditions and endeavoured to preserve them. He has also tried to develop and maintain standards in the Canadian theatre by helping to establish the National Theatre School and by staying informed about developments in international theatre. He has always been actively involved in the theatre in both facets of his double life, adding to his knowledge and experiences, and continually making new contributions.
Notes


4. Whittaker told this to Ronald Bryden in 1975.


12. Herbert Whittaker, address, Opening, Canadian Theatre Museums Project, Herbert Whittaker Fonds, York University, Toronto, undated.

13. Whittaker, address, Museums Project 1.


Whittaker, "Fridolin" 13.

Whittaker, "Fridolin" 13.

Whittaker, "Fridolin" 13.


Whittaker, "The Theatre" 168.

Whittaker, "The Theatre" 168.

Whittaker, "The Theatre" 168.


32 David Gardner told me this in June, 1995.

33 Sawyer, "Insights of a Drama Critic" 15.


37 Whittaker, "The Playwright" 7.

38 Whittaker, "The Playwright" 7.


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* Whittaker referred to a large number of plays in his reviews and articles. As there was no criterion for choosing one over another, I have included no plays in this list of works cited. Exceptions are The Farm Show and Hamlet, Prince of Quebec, which I quoted from.