

Saddlemeyer, Ann, ed. *Early Stages: Theatre in Ontario 1800-1914*. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1990. Pp. xiii, 413. 105 photographs & drawings. \$40 (cloth); \$17.95 (paper)

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tings." As a textbook, Nadel's work would serve as a fully adequate example of how to move toward that goal. Perhaps the major criticism of the book is only that Nadel does not adequately and deliberately define his concept of ethnicity until the last chapter, which, entitled "Particularism, Class Consciousness, and Community," is a masterful weaving together, in the manner of Fernand Braudel, of the level of "social time," or the social construction of reality, and the level of *l'histoire événementielle*, or the history of events.

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Referring to playwrights in her short introduction, Saddlemeyer observes that "[t]hen, as now, acceptance at home was achieved only after success abroad." I wonder whether the 'as now' really applies—any more than 'no one a prophet at home' ever and always applies. Maybe it does with TV and cinema, but with theatre? Have French, Freeman, Pollock, Fruet, Bolt, Walker, and a dozen more, had to be approved by London or Los Angeles before becoming draws in Canada? I think not. I think we turned that corner about twenty years ago.

Theatre in Ontario between 1800 & 1914, however, did have, in spite of the efforts of the essayists in *Early Stages* to paint a lively picture, a bleak time of it. It was perhaps no bleaker than theatre in, say, Australia or New Zealand 1850-1914, but bleak nevertheless. J. M. S. Careless, in his essay,

points out once more that Ontario began really to exist only after the United States' War of Independence; and Robertson Davies, in his piece, strongly implies, if he does not state, that theatre is an urban event: small towns and the long distances between them conspired against theatre in Upper Canada at least until the coming of the railways.

One of the results of keeping the tie with England was the constant looking toward "home" to find the tone to set, even in the case of stage entertainment. When plays did begin to be put on, they tended to be pieces by Goldsmith and Sheridan, Tom Taylor and T. W. Robertson, Jerrold, Jones, and Bulwer-Lytton—and Shakespeare. These, and plays by frothier writers as well, were put on often by regimental companies: the amateur British garrison troop-shows that formed a surprisingly large part of the Ontario theatre-scene during the last century, a large enough part to merit a chapter here devoted to their history.

Inevitably, when the railways came in, contact with the United States grew stronger. Plays by such United States writers as Boucicault and Denman Thompson began to be performed; and such United States entertainments as minstrel shows gained popularity here—not altogether understandably.

Early Stages has eight chapters by eight different writers. Three of the eight are much better than the others: Saddlemeyer's Introduction, Careless' chapter on the cultural setting in Ontario to 1914, and Davies' chapter on the 19th-century repertoire are all, in one word, excellent. It's not easy to write on theatre. Theatre is very much of the moment. The crowd, lights, mood, the alternating roars and hushes, make up theatre-atmosphere and it is hard to bring these into a serious history while still dis-

persing all the necessary information. The other five chapters here do not really try for atmosphere. They stitch together names, titles, dates, and recorded comments. The eighth chapter is a chronology, by Richard Plant, that does not pretend to be anything other than a list and it turns out to be more readable than the other four on variety, travelling-shows, regimental theatricals, and the theatre-buildings themselves.

I wish, by the way, that more had been made, by one or two of the essayists, of Graves Simcoe Lee. Lee, born in 1828, was "perhaps Ontario's first native playwright" and the author of, in 1853, *Fiddle, Faddle and Foozle*, the first indigenous play "on the Toronto stage." There are two portraits of Lee in the book, one when young and looking like Edgar Allan Poe, and one when old, but nothing is said of his life and career.

Casual readers interest in most aspects of the history of Canada probably will enjoy only the *Early Stages* chapters by Saddlemeyer, Careless, and Davies. A theatre-buff will find everything in the book worth knowing.

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Bell, John, ed. *Halifax: A Literary Portrait*. Lawrencetown Beach, Nova Scotia: Pottersfield Press, 1990. Pp. viii, 228. \$14.95 (paper).

As befits a port city with one of the finest natural harbours in the world, John Bell's anthology, *Halifax: A Literary Portrait*, is freighted with a rich and varied cargo. The anthology, with thirty-one selections in prose and poetry, presents glimpses of Halifax as "garrison town, naval station, major East Coast port, and centre of