

Section C

Unit 3

CANADIAN LITERATURE

First Nations Writing

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CANADIAN NATIVE DRAMA

Canada today is a cultural mosaic of many races and cultures. This vast country consists of people from various parts of the world- the English, the French, the Europeans, the Asians, the Africans and the Natives. Though once Canada belonged exclusively to the natives, now it has become the land of immigrants with the native people becoming a minority group. Canada today is a multicultural, multiracial society comprising of people with different religious beliefs and cultural practices thus forming a veritable salad bowl. This composite Canadian culture has become richer by virtue of the contributions made by diverse cultural groups living in Canada.

The literatures of native people in Canada had its origins in the oral tradition in the form of informal story telling, which included all types of myths, legends, tales and folklore, songs, ritual chants, prayers and orations. These legends and tales have become a part of oral traditions inherited by the native people from their forefathers and transmitted to the younger generation through verbal recitations. These were didactic in nature and helped to communicate their histories, belief systems and culture and religious practices. The natives thus forged to form a tribal identity and helped to perpetuate their age old group or tribal culture and traditions.

For a long time, the Western critics had considered native literature as savage and primitive, not meriting serious literary attention, resulting in the total neglect of Canada's native writing.

According to Penny Petrone, the important reasons for the neglect of native literature are European Cultural imperialism, their antipathy towards oral literature of the natives, the purist attitude of Western literary critics towards native literature that does not conform to their aesthetic demand.

Today times have changed. Both the Western and Indian scholars consider this Indian oral literature proper and are studied on its own terms and conditions. These oral writings have to be evaluated not according to Western

Eurocentric theories, which will be totally inappropriate both culturally and linguistically.

The natives of Canada started writing in English only by the middle of the 19th century. The influence of the Christian missionaries on Indians and their education in religious schools provided good opportunity for the Indians to learn English. As a result, many Indians were trained to become teachers and missionaries. Thus the natives who were trained began to write histories, reports, letters, and diaries.

In the second half of the 19th century three important books appeared:

- 1) Peter Booyentate Clarke's presentation of historical events in tableaux form
- 2) Louis Jackson's account of the famous Nile expedition
- 3) Charles Mair's closet drama in verse **Tecumseh**

Towards the end of the century the best-known Native writer who emerged was Emily Pauline Johnson who had come out with his collection of poetry and short stories.

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed a flowering of native creativity. Many newspapers and periodicals appeared in Canada, which provided a forum for the growing politically conscious native organizations. Many native speakers emerged and native oratory became an important literary form. Journalistic prose in the form of reports and essays became popular. The native writers presented very forcefully the wrongs and injustices meted out to the natives by the dominant White society in their writings in an angry and bitter tone.

There was a phenomenal explosion of creative writing by the natives during the 1970s and 80s. It is due to the support extended to the natives by native organizations and government agencies; publishers came forward to publish their works. All these resulted in the natives trying various literary forms like poetry, biography, short fiction, novels, dramas, history and children's literature. Many of these belonged to the younger generation of university trained writers, who had acquired vast experience in that they had conducted

workshops, organized conferences, debating and discussing important issues affecting the natives, editing anthologies and reviewing books etc. we have Beatrice Culleton, Jeannette Armstrong emerging as novelists. Maria Campbell, Basil H Johnston and Lee Maracle wrote excellent autobiographies.

NATIVE DRAMA: ITS EVOLUTION

One of the most important developments in native literature is the emergence of native drama in Canada. A native drama is a play written by a native dramatist dealing with the experiences of native people that sets it apart from the Canadian mainstream experience.

The natives had no tradition of written drama and no theatrical model to follow. The written tradition of drama by Indians began with Charles Mair's *Tecumseh*, a poetic drama based on history. After this, the native Indians did not try their hands at stage plays for a long time.

Native drama has really come of age in 1980s. A number of native playwrights like Tomson Highway, Margo Kane, Daniel David Moses, Drew Taylor, and John MacLeod have emerged on the theatrical scene with their plays. There appeared on the scene quite a number of native performing groups across Canada. The once neglected native drama has been growing now at a fast pace resulting in a number of dramatists writing plays for performance that added a further fillip to the growth of this genre.

The native life and experience has been an interesting subject dealt with in Canadian writing by Europeans and Americans. The Indians had always been a savage to the Europeans - a wild, animal like creature to some and a creature of innocence to others. The European and other 19th century colonizers thought that the simple silent people would become civilized with the blessings of Christianity. Later when the Indians refused to cooperate with the colonizer's intention, they were considered to be a sort of social nuisance, refusing to become civilized. There was a firmly held view that Indians would become extinct thus confirming 'doomed culture theory' or get assimilated into the Canadian mainstream culture

Generally speaking, the natives in Canada have been subjected to all kinds of oppression and discrimination leading to their loss of identity and their unique culture. So naturally, issues concerning their status and ethnicity are discussed in their writings. One finds a native playwright dealing with diverse issues such as race, class discrimination and oppression in the plays. There is also that 'unique native humour, pathos, rage, grief, suffering in addition to the expressions of love, joy, optimism, pride and celebrations of native values, customs and culture. (Grant, 105)

Many native playwrights have also dealt with social problems faced by the natives. According to Penny Petrone, some of the problems addressed by the native playwrights are "alcohol and drug abuse, suicide, wife battering, family violence, the racism of the justice system, loneliness, rejection, youth awareness, as well as modern day environmental issues" (172)

Today many native writers have come out with literary outpourings by going back to their rich cultural heritage and try to interpret ancient beliefs and values for the benefit of a larger audience both native and non-native.

As Agnes Grant says "the Aboriginal artists have not only a unique role but an obligation to reconstruct the suppressed heritage." (104). This has necessitated the natives to write in English to reach a larger audience. This has become necessary for the benefit of their native people who cannot communicate in their own languages since many of these have become dead.

CHARACTERISTICS OF NATIVE DRAMA:

A native drama is a play written by a native playwright dealing with the life and experiences of native people. The characters in the play are not only natives but their experiences are those of natives and Aboriginals.

NATIVE MYTHOLOGY

Native mythology plays an integral part in Aboriginal literary productions (Grant, 109). The trickster figure or the culture hero is the central character in native mythology. Human or animal, he is known under different names - Raven, Nanabush, Wisakedjale and Coyote. According to Petrone, the trickster at times, is presented in antitheatrical roles, as an actual creator or as a helper

who might either cooperate with or thwart the creator; as a helper of mankind or a malevolent being; as a crafty trickster able to change himself into animal or human shapes or the butt of ridicule; as a joker or a scapegoat who often falls victim to his own and others viles. (1) The trickster becomes an androgynous figure as seen in Tomson Highway's plays. In **Rez Sisters** he takes the form of male figure and in **Dry Lips** he becomes a female figure. Tomson Highway stresses the importance of Trickster when he says that he is as important to Cree culture as Christ is to Western culture. This trickster goes under many names and many guises. In fact he can assume any guise he chooses. Essentially a comic, clownish sort of character, "he teaches us about the nature and meaning of existence on the planet earth; he straddles the consciousness of man and that of God, the Great Spirit" (**Dry Lips** xiii). Highway demonstrates the differences between native and Christian traditions. For the native, life is "a continuous cycle, a self-rejuvenating force. By comparison, Christian theology is a straight line - birth, suffering and the apocalypse... human existence is not a struggle... its fun, a joyous celebration" (New, 255) It is because of the androgynous character of the Trickster figure, that Zhaboonigan in **The Rez Sisters** can freely describe her rape to him. The bingo master is the trickster who has come to ease Marie Adele's death. It is the native mythology employed in native plays that make it unique and different from theatrical tradition.

NATIVE HUMOUR

Another important feature of native writing is the use of humour. "Native humour is hearty and spontaneous and is often directed at misfortune and turned into a joke" (Grant, 112). It is often used to deal with the pain that is associated with poverty and suffering. One finds many instances of native humour in Highway's plays which can be understood, appreciated and enjoyed only by natives.

It is very difficult to analyse native humour on Western critical tradition. Non-natives have to witness the plays in the company of natives to understand

and appreciate unique humour, because cultural differences are involved in understanding and analyzing native humour.

Canada's native writers have come out with their literary output that shows extreme vitality and commitment. They do not want their writing to be evaluated on Eurocentric critical models. These writers have enriched the body of Canadian literature by delving deep into their rich culture and tradition and thereby contributed new perspectives and insights into Canadian literature.

GEORGE RYGA'S ECSTASY OF RITA JOE: NON-NATIVE PERSPECTIVE

One comes across in Canadian writing non-natives dealing with native experiences. George Ryga and Rudy Wiebe are two important White writers who deal with aboriginal experiences in a truly authentic manner in their works. Since both belong to the minority groups rather than the mainstream majority culture in Canada, it is quite possible that they look at the native suffering in a sympathetic way.

Ryga's *The Ecstasy of Rita Joe* describes the story of an Indian girl Rita on a reserve who leaves her family and follows her lover to the city. There she is arrested on a series of charges like prostitution, vagrancy, and shoplifting and finally raped and murdered. The trial is central to the play. She is given eight hours to find witnesses who can testify to her character. She turns to her lover, father, the priest and the teacher but none of them can help her. Ultimately the law condemns her and she is murdered. Finally the playwright expects the audience to respond to the moral value of the Canadian legal system.

The play depicts the plight of the Indians in the midst of White society and culture. The play points out the duplicity of the Canadian White establishment in dealing with the natives. Though Canada talks about promoting multiculturalism wherein different ethnic groups can live together by retaining their individual identities, thus becoming a cultural mosaic, the reality is different. The play clearly shows that Canadian society is a racist society that practices overt and covert racism, as is seen in the treatment, meted out to the people belonging to different ethnic backgrounds.

There is a world of difference between values practiced by the Whites and Indians. Ryga shows Rita's inability to assimilate into the White establishment, which brings her destruction. At the beginning the magistrate appears to be kind and greatly concerned for Rita's welfare. But as the [play progresses he becomes more and more hostile towards her and is bent upon her destruction. The magistrate says "the obstacles to your life are here - in your thoughts - possibly in your culture". She is then asked "to fix her hair, tame her accent and then perhaps change her name". We see in the play Rita's inability to understand and assimilate with mainstream Canadian culture. Rita cannot be saved either by the priest or the magistrate or Homer. At the beginning the magistrate appears to be kind and greatly concerned for Rita's welfare. But as the play progresses, he becomes more and more hostile towards her and bent upon her destruction. When David comes to take Rita to the reserve from the city she refuses to go. She is finally trapped. She becomes a victim because of her birth and upbringing; her culture. Though she is physically destroyed, she becomes a martyr at the end when her death ends in spiritual ecstasy. Thus Ryga delineates the plight of aboriginals in Canada in tragic terms.

This play raises a very pertinent critical issue, that is, appropriation of voice. "Appropriation of native materials through literature by non-native writers is a hotly debated topic in Canada today". (Grant, 105). How qualified Ryga, the Ukrainian outsider is to talk about the problems faced by the natives in Canada? Though the play was a great success and produced a tremendous theatrical and social impact at the times when it was performed, the play is not taken as a good example for cultural appropriation. Ryga is a bold writer and he portrays the problems faced by the natives in Canada who were trying to assimilate themselves with the Canadian mainstream society.

The Canadian government policy at that time was to promote assimilation and to encourage Indians to join the mainstream Canadian society.

The play has to be judged against the times in which it was written and also to find out whether the playwright has succeeded in sending out the message to the people and to the Canadian establishment. Ryga certainly was right in giving his message in clear-cut terms. He certainly portrayed the native suffering with great integrity and courage and conviction.

But today times have changed. Now there is the widely held view that native experiences must be narrated by the natives themselves and not by outsiders. The insider view will be more authentic and true. As Agnes Grant says, “to understand feelings about appropriation one needs only speculate on the reaction if David Daniel Moses or Margo Kane were to write dramas about a Jewish concentration camp in Poland - or the experiences of the Irish immigrants arriving in Canada.(107).

TOMSON HIGHWAY’S THE REZ PLAYS: NATIVE PERSPECTIVE

THE REZ SISTERS:

Tomson Highway is a very significant playwright drama to emerge in the latter half of the 80s with the publication of his two plays **The Rez Sisters** and **Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kaspuskasing**, which won the prestigious Dora Mavor Moore Award for the Best Play produced in Toronto in the years 1986-87. Highway says that his ambition in life is to make the Rez cool to show and celebrate what funky folk Canada’s Indian people really are. The play **The Rez Sisters** is set in the Indian reserve of Wasaychigan Hill on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. The action of the play centers around the seven ‘Rez’ sisters trip to Toronto to participate in the bingo game, the winning of which will fulfill their dreams and desires. The play has seven female characters besides the trickster Nanabush, played by a man.

The seven sisters hear a rumour about the Biggest Bingo in the world to be held in Toronto. After confirming the rumour, they decide to go there. But the main problem is to find the money required for the trip. They meet the chief for funding who turns down the proposal.

The second act opens with the sisters' firm resolve to go to Toronto at any cost. One of them, Annie becomes the leader of the group. They discuss in detail the things required for the trip like the cost of the fuel, food etc. they go in for fund-raising activities by taking up all kinds of odd jobs and they reach Toronto by traveling in a van. They see the bingo master at the podium calling out the numbers. The sisters wait patiently expecting their number to be called out. In a mood of desperation, the Rez sisters go to the podium, attack the bingo master and run away with the bingo machine. One of the sisters, Marie who is suffering from cancer dies and the remaining sisters return to their reserve.

Though the play appears to be simple, it carries a lot of meaning for the readers. This play is not simply about bingo or the Rez sisters' dreams or desires. The playwright avoids negative stereotypes of native people or their feelings of anger and violence at Canadian White establishment. There is in the play a calm acceptance of life with all its pain, sorrow and suffering.

All the Rez sisters have their own dreams and all of them have their own cups of sorrows and disappointments in life. Still, they have not lost their hope in life. Pelajia says that if she wins in the bingo game, she is going to use the money for laying good roads in the reserve, thus helping her entire community. Philomena wants to take part in every bingo and if she is lucky to win she is going to use it to build a nice bathroom with all facilities. At the same time, the reader also comes to know of her unhappy married life with the White man who had deserted her. Though she feels depressed, she maintains a cheerful disposition. Similarly, Emily, another of the sisters reveals her tragic, painful married life.

Marie Adele reveals her desire to buy a scenic beautiful island full of tall trees, where she is planning to live with her husband and children. She is not sure whether she would live that long because she is suffering from cancer.

Similarly Annie Cook, who is interested in music, wants to buy all the music records from stores in Toronto. She also wants to visit the nightclubs and listen to live bands and thereby enjoy her life.

The Rez sisters is a fine example of a native drama in that it has all the elements associated with native writing. This play delineates a typical native experience as lived by aboriginals in a reserve. The playwright has brought out the native humour both through characters and situations. The Rez sisters' bingo dreams, their ridiculous march to the band office, their fund raising activities - all these provide humorous moments. It is Philomena who is often ridiculed for her frequent trips to the toilet. Annie Cook is often teased for her manner of walking. Veronique becomes a butt of ridicule because she has no children in spite of two marriages. The playwright has incorporated elements of native mythology by introducing the character of Nanabush. Nanabush first visits as a White seagull in the yard; then as a nighthawk during their journey to Toronto and finally as the bingo master

Highway blames both the Whites and the natives for the sufferings of aboriginals. One finds in the play instances of husbands behaving irresponsibly and the drunken behaviour of the natives. The natives have forgotten their religion, culture and tradition and even language. They have forsaken their native gods and native spirituality. Thus this play **The Rez Sisters** shows how the natives adopt a positive attitude towards life in spite of the pain, sufferings and disappointments.

DRY LIPS OUGHTA MOVE TO KASPUSKASING:

Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kaspuskasing is a very disturbing play that provides a complete contrast to the world of **the Rez sisters**. Both the plays have certain common features in that both are set on the Wasaychigan Indian reserve on Manitoulin Island and both the plays have common characters. While **the Rez Sisters** deals with the lives of seven women and the Trickster Nanabush played by a man, **Dry Lips** deals with the life of seven men and Nanabush played by a woman. The playwright deliberately presents a bleak and violent world of the natives on the reserve to the readers, as he wants to

“expose the poison before the healing takes place.” Highway wants the natives to understand the implications of their complacent and matter of fact attitude to native life and values, which are detrimental to their existence.

At the beginning of the play we are introduced to Zachary who wants to open a bakery on the reserve, which is opposed by Big Joey who plans to open, a radio station, which he says, will serve the entire community. Big Joey threatens Zachary that he would show Zachary’s wife the photographs that he has taken when he was sleeping naked with another lady Gazelle Nataways, if he does not drop the balcony proposal. Poor Zachary is thereby forced to withdraw the proposal. There is another character Creature Nataways who seems to be supporting Big Joey’s plans. His love for Big Joey has some homosexual basis, which the reader comes to know only later during the course of the play. Highway introduces another character Spooky Lacrox, a severe alcoholic, who has now become a devoted Roman Catholic, which shows natives abandoning their native culture to embrace Christianity.

We are introduced to Simon Starblanket, a young man who represents the typical native values. He appears in the traditional dress stitched by his lover Patsy whom he wants to marry. Simon says “we have got to learn to dance again” and he along with Patsy are going to bring back and restore the native values in the community.

The other important character introduced in the play is Dickie Bird Halked who was born in the Dickie Bird tavern after which he was named. At Dickie Bird’s birth in the tavern, Big Joey simply ran away because he could not bear the sight of blood coming from the womb as he was reminded of his own experiences in South Dakota in 1973 where he was severely beaten up by FBI agents. Because his mother Black Lady Halked was a severe alcoholic her son was born speechless. Towards the end of the play, Dickie Bird is seen wandering in the forest where he brutally rapes Patsy right before Big Joey and Creature Nataways. These two incidents that left a very deep scar in his minds made him completely indifferent to the natives’ sufferings in the reserve. Later when questioned by Zachary as to why Big Joey did not do anything to prevent

the rape taking place, he reveals his mind by saying that he hates the native women who have taken the power of men and who are much worse than FBI agents. His bitterness and hatred makes him remain a silent spectator when Patsy was raped.

The playwright through this play wants to expose the weaknesses of the natives, which are responsible for their sorry state of existence. The frequent drinking habits of native people, the use of oversized prosthetic devices by native women to attract men, the homosexual behaviour of Creature Nataways towards Big Joey - all these are responsible for many of the ills afflicting the native society. Highway also points out the lack of unity or cooperation among the natives for the social advancement. There seems to be no cooperation among the natives; each one working at cross-purposes. The natives have forgotten their values, religion, culture and tradition and religious heritage. People like Spooky by abandoning native values have become ardent followers of Catholic Church. Highway has certainly succeeded in exposing the poison as he has brought out many of the weaknesses of the native Indians in Canada.

This play abounds in humour arising out of character and situation besides sparkling dialogues. The scene where Zachary is seen in compromising situation is highly hilarious. Pierre's malapropisms provide humorous moments in the play.

Even though the play depicts certain scenes that are disgusting to the readers, the ending of the play strikes an optimistic note. Zachary is seen in his happy house with his wife and a baby suggesting a new era of optimism. The playwright conveys a clear-cut message that the future of natives is hopeful with the younger generation leading to a resurgence of native values and native identity in the present day multicultural Canadian context.

LINDA GRIFFITH'S AND MARIA CAMPBELL'S THE BOOK OF JESSICA: A THEATRICAL TRANSFORMATION:

The Book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation is a fine example of collective creation. This book is a collaborative work by Linda Griffith's, a non-native writer and Maria Campbell, a native writer.

Jessica is a dramatic rendering of the Métis writer Maria Campbell's autobiography- **Half-Breed** - a powerful life story of a "woman whose courage and strength you will never forget" (Begum, 28). Meti refers to mixed blood people, half-breeds who are neither White nor native but a race born out of native and White parents. This play narrates her struggle as a Métis woman in Canadian society. To be a native as a woman in Canada is to suffer from the twin disadvantages of racial discrimination and pronounced gender bias.

The play reveals through flashback highly critical moments in Jessica's life, which includes her traumatic childhood experiences, her marital desertion, her deeply distressing experiences of prostitution, drug addiction and her native activism followed by bitter spiritual discontent.

The idea of doing a play came to Campbell's mind when she saw **Almighty Voice**, "a play about native people done by Whites" (J 16). This play delved deep into the native spiritual world, which according to natives could be interpreted only them. Jessica is a play "about a woman struggling with two cultures, and how she got them balanced, because when she leaned into one a part of her got lost, so she had to learn into the other and try to understand and find a balance" (J 17).

The play opens in total darkness signifying the darker side of life of the Métis woman. On the stage is seen an old native woman, Vitaline. Jessica, a rich woman, suppressed and exploited by male dominated society, appears on the scene. She feels helpless and so cries in despair:

I am not Indian, I'm not White I'm a half-breed. I live in a White world full of filing cabinets and common sense... they are around

me in making decisions... my life just gets weirder... no, its worse than that... waves and waves of fear (J, 121).

Vitaline, her spiritual mentor, moved by Jessica's pathetic condition, prays to her spirits to grant the power to Jessica and give her a new life.

Jessica now unlocks her heart and reveals her real condition. She says that life has almost come to dead end and she is unable to move either forward or backward. The spirits decide to take Jessica back to give her balance.

Jessica is seen slowly gaining spiritual gifts. She becomes more mature and gains control over her natural gifts. The struggle that she undergoes between two worlds, native and non-native, is an integral part of the spiritual journey.

Then she is reminded of her tragic incident that happened in her life. When she was 12, she was raped. Jessica thinks that the spirits had not come forward to help her and she has lost hope in the spirits. She says that she has the power to destroy and kill them. Jessica's bitter personal experiences and sufferings make her hate all kinds of rituals. It is Wolverine who wants to show Jessica the brighter side of life.

At the age of nineteen, Jessica's marriage breaks off and her baby is placed in a convent. Due to dire need, she chooses to become a prostitute. Her agony due to this sexual exploitation makes her think of committing suicide.

To reassure her, the spirits arrange for a meeting between Sam, a native activist and Jessica. Sam, the representative of Red Power Movement, has a frank discussion with her on the injustice and ill treatment meted out to his race. He wants Jessica to stand up and join him in fighting with non-natives for a common cause. She starts reading books on Marx and thinks of embracing communism in dealing with racism in Canada.

Jessica now tries to be both a native and a modern woman. She wants to learn a little bit of diplomacy; how to handle publicity and how to get grants to be used for the upliftment of native community. Sam promises her help for realizing her goal. Jessica's pain and sufferings make Vitaline pray to set her on the right trade:

Grandmothers and grandfather, hear this coyote woman. Thunder beings, spirits of fire, earth, air and sea. Where are our prayers? Where the earth is covered and hidden... there is power that will save us, let me teach her well, let me teach her well” (J, 149).

Vitaline releases her spirits, which in turn release Jessica. Slowly Jessica learns to control her spiritual powers, which make her assume a larger identity. Her spirit of adventure, optimism and sincerity make her a powerful woman, one who can fight against injustices meted out to the natives. She even believes in revolution that would bring about a change in the structure of the society. Finally, in a trance, Jessica sees a figure walking towards her. In the end, she accepts the old ways of the spirit world. Her reintegration with the spirit world leading her towards the path of spiritual healing becomes complete.

The Book of Jessica: A Theatrical Transformation is a good example of the concept of appropriation. Both Linda Griffith and Maria Campbell talk about their experiences in carrying out this collaborative effort. They share the difficulty of a White actor trying to portray the pain and sufferings of the natives. Diana Bessai says “they were keenly sensitive to the inevitable tension arising when a White actor attempts to portray any native role, especially one dealing in a very personal way with racial suffering and abuse” (230). Jessica has gone through shattering experiences, which have to be brought out by a White actor. This raises a host of problems associated with appropriation of voice and materials.

The mixed blood ceremony and the significance of the Red Cloth are so deeply rooted in the native or neti’s culture that it is not easy for a White to understand the meaning. The meaning of ‘give-away’; everyone contributing something or parting with something has got tremendous significance in the native socio-cultural context. Maria understands the meaning and significance

of parting with the red cloth in the metis context which she does very painfully.

The play also raises the nature and purpose of artistic creation. For Linda, the main function of art is aesthetic. But for Maria art is utilitarian, a functional art in that it has to serve the needs of the community. A non-native community may orient itself to the demands of aesthetics. But an oppressed community cannot afford to subordinate the socio-political agenda to the aesthetic one. For Maria, though art steals from people, it gives back to the community, it heals and empowers them. Art thus becomes the most powerful, healing tool.

Interestingly, these two women talk about the joint ownership of the play. Linda, though a White woman, feels the need to learn and know more about native spirituality. She expresses her passion for the treasures of native spirituality when she says:

I'm a gold digger...I saw your culture, and it was like a treasure chest opening up...I went for that treasure chest with everything in me, my fists were full of your gold, my fingers closed in your jewels...(J 84-86).

This play also raises the issue of language. Though the Métis have their own language, they can never speak will either the native language or the language of the Whites. This linguistic constraint becomes a problem for Griffiths in understanding and interpreting Maria's experiences. One has to be very careful in using native language. A liberal use of native language will make the play unintelligible to the readers. At the same time, the use of English may not capture the true native sensibilities or native humour.

To sum up, the writing of the play *Jessica* gives rise to a number of problems. The writers have certainly succeeded in dealing with these issues in a mutually satisfying way. The play thus, becomes a genuine collaborative

work, in which both the writers succeed in drawing upon their own resources and turn the play into an exciting piece of theatre.

SUMMING UP

Native drama has really come of age. The decade of 80s has witnessed the flowering of native drama. A group of native playwrights like Daniel David Moses, Drew Hayden Taylor, Shirley Cheechoo, Margo Kane, Monique Mojica have made significant impact on the theatrical scene today. There are also a few young new talented writers like Floyd Favel, Evan Adams, Ruby Alexis slowly trying to emerge on the native theatrical scene. Daniel David Moses' *Coyote City* (1990) Linda Griffith's and Maria Campbell's *Jessica* (1989) are native plays that have been performed on the stage, but have not found publishers. Many native performing groups have also come up across Canada like Red Roots Theatre Group in Winnipeg, De-Bah-Jeh-Mu-Jig Theatre Group in Manitoulin Island, Ontario, the Upisasik Theatre of Ile-A-La-Cross, Saskatchewan and Native Earth Performing Arts and Theatre Pensee Muraille in Toronto.

Through the medium of drama, native dramatists are trying to reach out to a larger audience and make a tremendous impact on the theatrical scene. These playwrights try to present "different mythologies, a different kind of spirituality, different attitudes towards sexuality, a different attitude towards land and perhaps the most difficult aspect for Western readers, to comprehend a gender neutral, non-hierarchical world view (Grant, 114). These new brand of creative writings are trying to provide a new alternate native aesthetics to the Eurocentric critical tradition.

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