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Re-thinking Multiculturalism: A Theatrical Approach

Abstract

This article takes three examples of contemporary Canadian playwriting by writers of visible minorities and compares their dramatic treatments of the home narrative. ***The Rez Sisters*** *by Tomson Highway, the most celebrated and famous of the three plays, presents life on an aboriginal reservation;* ***Bombay Black*** *by Anosh Irani takes place in the writer's home city of Bombay; and Wajdi Mouawad's* ***Tideline*** *presents a transcultural journey from Montréal to an unnamed middle eastern homeland. Each of these plays presents distinct views and a different perspective with respect to cultural communities which make up the Canadian mosaic.*

Cet article traite le thème de le pays d'origin contrasté avec le nouvel pays comme une source d'identité. Trois exemples sont données de la dramaturgie contemporaire canadienne par des écrivains des minorities visibles: ***The Rez Sisters*** *par Tomson Highway, un dramaturge autochtone;* ***Bombay Black*** *de Anosh Irani, un emigré de la Sud-Asie; et* ***Tideline*** *(Littoral) par le Canadien-Libanais Wajdi Mouawad. Chaque pièce présente une perspective unique d'une des communautaires culturelles de le Canada.*

Canada has long regarded itself, and has on occasion been regarded by others, as a beacon of multicultural success in an increasingly fractured political world. Yet while Canadian culture encompasses many cultures, perhaps more cultures than any other single nation-state in the world today, the truth of the matter is that outside the major cities there is little or no sense of a multi-ethnic society, and cities are made up of clusters or enclaves where visible minorities gather and transact social commerce amongst themselves, venturing beyond their borders only when necessary. Perhaps this is not a bad thing. Perhaps this is the way it should be. This, after all, is the message of Central Europe and the Balkans: we can live together as long as you stay on your side of the fence. Do not pretend that what's mine is yours. Otherness is accepted as a necessary element in the making of a national (and nationalist) cultural identity.

Yet for all its fissures Canadian society seems to plug along quite acceptably for most of its citizens, avoiding most of the divisiveness and enmity which marks so many other multicultural states such as England, France and Germany. This may be because its second-generation children of New Canadians create an increasing bond between old country and new, or it may simply be because we are all too boring to fight about it. Yet these crucial fights concerning personal and cultural identity take place each day all over Canadian society. Canadianists in central Europe are familiar, to some degree with the literary manifestation of this field of discourse, but in my experience the more practical and visceral world of theatre and drama has been overlooked with regard to the insights it can offer on this topic.

Canadian drama is our literature's poor cousin. For every Alice Munro, Michael Ondaatje, and Margaret Atwood there are our theatrical equivalents, no less brilliant but toiling in relative anonymity. In terms of cultural discourse, it is one thing for a Rohinton Mistry or a Thomas King to write a well-received novel or essay, but it is quite different—and, I would submit, far more difficult—for a Canadian of colour to write a play which is produced. The impact may be smaller in pure numbers but it is greater in how it brings to physical life some of the elements of social practice one can safely gloss over while reading a novel. Canadian theatre remains a rich and as yet largely untapped vein of research for Canadianists.

In this paper I will discuss the work of three Canadian playwrights from different ethnic communities, and the approach each has taken with a signature work in portraying their home communities within the context of a Canadian reception environment. The first play, Tomson Highway's ***The Rez Sisters***, pre-dates the others, having been produced in 1986. Wajdi Mouawad' s play ***Tideline*** was first produced, in French as ***Littoral*** in 1999 and last year in its English-language première at the Tarragon Theatre in Toronto; Anosh Irani's ***Bombay Black*** was

produced in Toronto in 2006. All three plays are amongst the most successful plays produced in their eras. ***The Rez Sisters*** has been translated into several languages, and, like ***Littoral***, has travelled to numerous international festivals. ***Bombay Black*** won four Dora Mavor Moore Awards in Toronto in the 2006 theatre season. Highway is an aboriginal Canadian of Cree descent. Irani is an Indo-Canadian who emigrated to Canada as a young man. Mouawad is a Maronite Christian who was born in Lebanon, raised as a child in France and spent his adolescence, and subsequent adult life, in Québec.

While the three plays come from different periods and derive from different ethnic sources they share several commonalities, not least the fact of having a Canadian audience—however that may come to be defined—as their initial receptive objective. Stylistically, the plays veer from the accomplished theatrical plagiarism of Highway's ***Rez Sisters***, a barely-concealed *homage* to Michel Tremblay's seminal play ***Les Belles Soeurs***, to the simple, almost naïve, structure and dialogue of Irani's ***Bombay Black***, to the brilliant humanism and metatheatricality of Mouawad's epic ***Tideline***.

It will be unsurprising to any critic of a post-colonialist bent that one of the primary themes shared by all three works is the *home narrative*. It is revealing how each playwright chooses to unpack the complex and often mysterious workings of his own culture for an audience which cannot be assumed to have the same received knowledge of this culture as the playwright. This sets up, from the beginning, a tension between the writer-as-cultural-exemplar and expert and the audience as willing-but-untutored recipients. This is not an ideal discursive relationship for drama, which deals best with shared cultural (or inter-cultural) knowledge and then proceeds to question the tenets that are part of that knowledge base. How does one talk knowledgably and comprehensively about one's native culture to strangers, and stay true to the defining criteria of drama?

One answer is that plays are not meant to be encyclopaedias or vast receptacles of cultural knowledge. It is intriguing to see what each of these playwrights has chosen to reveal about their home cultures through both the form and function of their play texts.

In ***The Rez Sisters*** the action of the play takes place on the Wasaychigan Reserve on Manitoulin Island. Wasy, as it is called in the play, is a fictitious construct; but Manitoulin Island assuredly is not, and it is well-known as a home for First Nations culture in Canada. It's significant that the reserve, itself an enclave populated exclusively by aboriginals, is on an island, that is, a piece of land *apart from mainstream Canada*. The women of the reserve, who live and breathe the game of Bingo, dream of travelling to Toronto to play in the (all capital lettered) BIGGEST BINGO GAME IN THE WORLD. To get to Toronto—and white, affluent, mainstream Canadian culture—is an overwhelming task for the seven women. It is several hours away by car—they can't quiet determine how far, because it is so unfamiliar—and of course such a trip is prohibitively expensive for women who, like most of the adult aboriginal population in Canada, especially on reserves, live on government support. Toronto/Canada thus takes on the proportions of an Oz, a place where the streets are paved with gold.

Each of the women, who are all related by blood or marriage, is practical about her life prospects and in particular about the deficiencies of their men. Pelajia Patchnose is first seen atop her roof, hammering shingles, joined by her unwilling helper Philomena Moosetail, who ascends the ladder in high heels. They are soon joined by Annie Cook, Pelajia's half-sister, who dreams of joining the white (and Jewish) Fritz the Katz as a back-up singer for his country band and travelling around Ontario. Véronique St-Pierre claims a heart condition in order to do as little work as possible; the tough biker chick Emily Dictionary runs the reservation store, and Marie-Adèle Peterson takers acre of her developmentally disabled daughter, Zhaboonigan (Cree for "needle").

The listing of the characters' names indicates a patchwork of backgrounds: archaic English names such as Pelajia and Philomena, mutilated European names such as "Dictionary" (Dadzinanare), Franco-anglo hybrids like "Marie-Adèle Peterson", and derogatory Cree or Ojibway words such as "Zhaboonigan". This indicates a blurring of cultural identity, a sense of distance or alienation underscored by Highway's device of having the characters consistently refer to each other using their full given names. Yet the bond between the women is intimate and probably inextricable, despite the myriad tensions which run through their lives on Wasy. Highway here may intentionally be highlighting the value of family over *nation*. The women of the play are acutely aware of their social status vis-à-vis white society, but they are no more irritated by this than they are at the indolence and chauvinism of their men, who form virtually a second clan on the reserve (Highway devoted his next play, ***Dry Lips Oughta Move To Kapuskasing***, to the stories of the men.) Their dreams are small. Marie-Adèle, who must go to

Toronto for cancer tests, wants to protect her disabled daughter. Philomena wants a new toilet. Annie would go on tour with Fritz. Except for the soon-abandoned attempt at persuading the Band Chief to fund their trip by promising the winnings will go to paving the reservation's roads, the women's musings are notably free from socio-political concerns. They are, rather, political in a personal sense. Each desires a little more freedom than they have, or are currently allowed, and all are aware that there is no convenient enemy or bogeyman as occurs so frequently in earnest texts written by sympathetic and patronising white Canadians. None of these women are victims. They are, instead, possessed of an earthy vitality which enlivens their surroundings, whatever happens. Thus, by the end of the play, after the women have successfully raised the massive amount of $1200 to travel to Toronto, where they have played THE BIGGEST BINGO GAME IN THE WORLD and lost, where Marie-Adèle has had her tests and has soon after died, the women are as they were at the beginning of the play. Pelajia is at work on her roof, Philomena is unwillingly helping out, Annie drops by to borrow a ghetto blaster so she can practice a country tune. One thing has changed; Emily, the bisexual biker chick, has become pregnant. Hope, in the form of a newborn, will continue to infuse the lives of these women.

Native Spirituality is present in ***The Rez Sisters*** in the dancing, mischievous form of Nanabush, the Trickster (played by Tomson Highway's brother René in the original production). Nanabush is present when least expected, and often referred to in passing by the women, but only Zhaboonigan, the slow girl, can see him. Highway thus demonstrates that native spirituality, as with their language and traditional customs, remains present in aboriginal society, but in a manner that is increasingly marginalised. The device of the dancing Nanabush is very effective, lyrically underscoring the idea that a great resource is available to the women (and by extension to their culture) that they are in danger of losing through their inattention.

At the end of ***The Rez Sisters*** all the "sisters" have come home. They will dream their small dreams, and they will remain part of the life of the "rez", but their lives involve acceptance, not resignation. The spectator respects the pragmatism with which they endure their daily travails and the earthy humour of their interactions and the lyrical nature of their rich inner lives.

Where Highway's characters, as First Nations exemplars, have been confined to a tiny patch of what was once their original homeland, Anosh Irani takes his characters back to their cultural source, India. This is a Canadian play in form and perhaps in terms of the relative naivety of the content, but the characters and setting are resolutely Indian. The setting is Bombay—and even the choice of the anglicised term, rather than the correct "Mumbai" is interesting for what it connotes, an older version of Indian culture where colonial influences are present but generally interwoven into the fabric of daily life.

In ***Bombay Black*** a woman, Padma, sells her daughter to strangers as a dancer (not for sex). The men come to their small apartment where they pay a great deal of money to watch her daughter, Apsara. As with ***The Rez Sisters***, the play's focus is on a nuclear social structure which is all female and where the male or males are notably absent. The entry of the blind Kamal marks the entry of the absent father, whose interests he comes to represent.

Kamal wants to pay for a dance even though he is blind. Padma, a Fagin-type, is only too happy to take the money, but in so doing she creates a catastrophe; Apsara loses her sight when Kamal reaches out to touch her. Over a series of days the truth is revealed; Apsara and Kamal were betrothed when she was three and he was ten. At the betrothal ceremony he reached to touch her and was struck blind. Shortly afterward, as Apsara becomes the subject of scorn and revulsion in her village for her part in this scandal, her father, a holy man, removes her to a temple where he systematically rapes her until one day (it is unexplained how this occurs) he is gone and Padma is left with her barely repressed hatred and anger to take care of the girl. Kamal appears years later to ask for a dance, but with a hidden agenda. He wants to reveal himself to Apsara in the hope that in some way the curse will be reversed and he will regain his sight. Instead, as mentioned, Apsara is blinded.

Kamal has a second objective. He has been in contact with the father of Apsara, who is dying and wants to see her. Apsara is opposed to this, but Padma understands this as an opportunity to wreak the revenge she has long sought. Kamal is unwillingly recruited in this plan. At the end of the play, as Padma waits with a giant butcher knife—the action and discourse is anything but subtle—Kamal appears, carrying an urn which contains the ashes of the father. It is a dramatic let-down after all the breast-beating and invocations of a Revengeful God, and it is typical of the convenient theatrical devices employed by Irani to tie together the narrative. Kamal and Apsara find themselves alone—the characters come and go in increasingly disjunctive fashion through the play—and in true Bollywood

fashion they pledge their willingness to fall in love in a moment of fantastic realism where they descend into the sea. Apsara, who in Hindu lore was a victimised woman who ignored the calming effects of the water and the single lotus where she found herself, is linked by fate to Kamal, whose name, fittingly, means "lotus".

The play is simplistic in its dramaturgy, particularly in the jarring transitions between episodes and in the penchant of each character for announcing exactly what is on his or her mind. This brings to mind the dramatic criticism of Gotthold Lessing, who rephrased Aristotle in saying that a playwright cannot defend implausibility or dramatic incongruity on the grounds of historical or cultural accuracy. Indian characters may in fact speak in this manner, but this does not excuse the dramatic lassitude it produces in the Canadian spectator. The narrative itself is formulaic and the characters represent points of view rather than fully-fleshed individuals. Perhaps this is due to the restrictiveness of the culture of which each is a part and the need to manifest that culture in the most direct and powerful way in the short time allotted to dramatic presentation. Again, however, this seems like dissembling. Irani proudly notes that he comes from

> a long line of storytellers, none of whom are writers…we used to get drunk at family occasions and spread vicious lies about people who weren't there . That's the purest form of storytelling; you can't get any better than that. (Irani 2007, iv)

This may or may not be true, but storytelling in drama must have an urgent dramatic purpose. We learn that Indian culture is a storytelling culture, and we discern clearly why the characters tell these stories to each other; but the result is a forced, expositional form of drama that lacks an undercurrent of action.

Like Highway, Irani uses humour to good effect in the play, notably with the bloodthirsty pragmatist, Padma. The use of humour saves both plays from descending into the maudlin or the melodramatic, although in the case of ***Bombay Black*** it is a very near miss indeed.

Tideline shares thematic elements with ***The Rez Sisters*** and ***Bombay Black*** through both its emphasis on absent fathers and the location of the action. In terms of the sophistication of its dramaturgy and the devices used to relate the narrative, however, ***Tideline*** is in a class of its own. It is surely one of the great plays of the last twenty years written in Canada and Mouawad may well already be our greatest living playwright, though he is barely forty.

Wajdi Mouawad is, as he says, "Lebanese in his childhood, French in his way of thinking, and Québecois in his style of theatre" (end page). This is evident on all counts in ***Tideline***. The play begins in Montréal with the death of the father of an aimless, s young man, Wilfrid, and soon relocates to an unnamed middle-eastern country. The number of metatheatrical references in the play is a unique feature of Québecois dramaturgy and the "French way of thinking" can be found in the surreal and poetic story of a boy who goes on a journey to bury his father—and takes his dead father along for the ride, arguing with him on the way.

Wilfrid is on the verge of climaxing with a girl he has picked up and brought home to his flat when he gets a telephone call relating the news that his father has been found dead, seated in a chair at the beach. The aimless 26 year-year old youth is plunged into crisis. He must identify his father, but first he must negotiate the bureaucracy to get to the morgue and wait until it opens in the morning. Mouawad's dramaturgy is consistently, and satisfyingly, surprising. We encounter Wilfrid not in some quasi-television style realistic scene, but rather standing before an unnamed and unidentified authority figure, rambling about what it feels like to be climaxing just as you find out your father is dead. Eventually we learn that the figure is a magistrate, and that Wilfrid is pleading for permission to take his father's body back to his homeland—but this is many scenes away and the spectator is left to ponder the questions without the answers being instantly supplied.

Wilfrid, still squarely caught between boy and man, tries to escape his thoughts by walking down a street. He is followed by an entertainingly obtrusive film crew, one of the two imaginary constructs with which he has book-ended his rational existence. The other is his imaginary Knight, Guiromelan, who appears whenever Wilfrid is in crisis, generally to yell in a blood-curdling manner and to kill the object of Wilfrid's stress. It is clear that Wilfrid regards himself as an *other*, a person who is marginalised and exists outside of normal human relations, who views himself in the manner of Camus' *l'étranger* (but with a great deal more humour). He is overmatched by the responsibilities involved in seeing to his father's burial. His first thought is to bury his father in the crypt belonging to his mother's family. What follows is a darkly comic scene where the family, particularly the men, object

strenuously to any idea of the father's interment in the family crypt; they blame him for the untimely death of Wilfrid's mother. It's notable that the names of each of the mother's family are francophone, even though, as we learn later, all of them came from the same soil as Wilfrid's father. Mouawad is making a point about bourgeois assimilation. At one point in the argument, the hothead Uncle Émile says of the manner in which Wilfrid speaks

> He sounds like his father—just like his father! He didn't even bother to teach you the accent of our homeland! You talk like a foreigner with a foreign accent to the members of your family!"(Mouawad 2002, 39)

It's unclear which "homeland" this man with the francisised name is referring to, or which accent—what is clear is that he, and by extension the family of Wilfrid's mother, have ostracised his father and associated his request with that ostracisation. It's revealed that Wilfrid's mother Jeanne died giving birth to Wilfrid and that Wilfrid's father Thomas had been warned by doctors that this would occur. With the introduction (later) of the anglo- and francophone names of Wilfrid's mother and father, and adding in the extent to which francophone names exist in parts of Lebanese society (particularly upper-class society), the extent to which Mouawad is making a point becomes unclear. Yet when the action moves to the homeland the same incongruity can be glimpsed. Wilfrid encounters a blind man in his father's village whose name is Ulrich. The blurring of what has been regarded as a signifier of life-and-death importance in some cultures (as in Northern Ireland) is an intriguing indication that Mouawad's story is not meant to evoke nostalgia for the vanished homeland or a sentimentalised version of a cultural narrative. These are errors of dramaturgy that both ***The Rez Sisters*** and ***Bombay Black*** commit to a greater or lesser degree. What Mouawad is concerned with, and what he believes is fundamental, is humanity. In this sense the play is closer to ***The Rez Sisters*** than to ***Bombay Black***'s stratified society.

In one of the first metatheatrical moments in the play the family decides they will all go to the funeral home to resolve the dispute. Uncle Émile resists—he believes, correctly, that the decorum of the funeral home will enable the others to shut him up—but in a moment the actors simply announce that they are in the funeral home, a new reality acknowledged, with disgust, by Émile. Another element of this metatheatricality is the twinning of the actors playing the family members with roles they play of villagers in the homeland, who take on the same characteristics as the family members. This would be merely convenient or expedient except that, again, it becomes a resonant comic moment as when the dead Father remarks about Wilfrid's new mate Amé:

> FATHER Don't you think he looks a bit like your Uncle Émile?
> WILFRID You're right, there's a strong resemblance. (Mouawad 2002, 105)

This sense of playfulness adds a level of delight and wonder to the play, implying that even a play where a central character is dead from the beginning is, at its root, about the joy of living. The dialogue between the dead Father and Wilfrid (and others) is often filled with witty repartee in the useful manner of Wildean dialogue; when one is dead the best one can do is to ruminate about it in an entertaining manner, and even better if it knowingly sends up the portentousness of older Classical drama. The Father shares a moment alone with the imaginary Knight Guiromelan:

> KNIGHT Ah, Death!
> FATHER Ah, Dream!
> KNIGHT Where will we find the single thing that gives us peace?
> FATHER I'm telling you, knight. I'm telling you. We are nothing. What we seek is everything. Dead man's honour.
> KNIGHT Easily said, but not easily done, I tell you. Knight's honour.
> …
> KNIGHT It's so quiet all of a sudden.
> FATHER I guess a dead man talking to a dream isn't exactly deafening. (Mouawad 2002, 105)

Rejected by his family, Wilfrid resolves to take his father's body back across the sea to where he was born. There, although he finds an equal level of resistance from the villagers, who have filled their cemeteries to bursting with dead from the war, he finds his own *tribe*, a group of fellow outcasts, each fatherless in different ways, each existing at odds with their home society, each exploding with the repressed need to shout their stories and share their secrets with the world. He first encounters Simone, an abrasive young girl who plays a screechy violin at all hours to annoy the citizens of Wilfrid's father's village (and, metaphorically, to announce her existence even as she is shunned).

The first thing she tells Wilfrid to do is to step to the edge of a nearby cliff where she shouts

> SIMONE Wilfrid is here! Thomas is dead! Here I am! (Mouawad 2002, 79)

Where the announced identities of the characters in ***Bombay Black*** appear simplistic and rudimentary her it produces a kind of shock. Simone is a wild girl, the kind who will set Wilfrid free whether he wishes it so or not. She has a thematic purpose but even more importantly a personal objective, a full character which is expressed consistently in her animated aggression. Together they leave Thomas' village and as they search for a resting place for him they pick up allies. Amé is the violent boy who has answered Simone's violin each night from another village with his drum. Sabbé is the boy Amé has heard laughing in the distance. Massi is the boy who Sabbé heard laugh in response each time he laughed. Together they form a band of others, joined, of course, by the increasingly decomposed father (who wryly calls attention to his condition by dabbing green make-up on his body), and more intermittently by the Knight and the film crew. Wilfrid is being chased by his boyhood, but he is unsure where he is running to.

At last the group encounters Joséphine, a girl weighed down with a stack of large telephone directories. She has been looking for them ever since she heard from the villagers that there were three individuals in this group that they would not name. She is eager to get Sabbé, Amé and Massi to recite their names to her because she is engaged in remembering every name of every person in the war-torn land, dead or alive. She has started by collecting all the phone books of the country and by reciting the names of the lost, over and over.

Joséphine's quest is clearly parallel with Wilfrid's although it has a grander scale: the preservation of memory as a cultural touchstone. The manner in which Mouawad deals with this is lyrical, dramatically sophisticated, and of a scope and magnitude that is unusual in North American drama, which tends to the realistic and the detailed rather than to the macro- aspects of the cosmos. Mouawad reveals in the introduction that he was thinking of a way to weave together three narratives which strongly influenced him; ***Oedipus Rex***, ***Hamlet***, and ***The Idiot***. Mouawad believes theatre must have a strongly intellectual stimulus behind each of its emotional expressions. This also places him at odds with the majority of theatremakers working in English in Canada. ***Oedipus*** shows up in the story of how Amé, returning as a soldier from the war, unwittingly kills his father at a crossroads, unable to recognise him for the blood in which he is covered. ***Hamlet*** is personified in the quest of Wilfrid and the presence of the "ghost" (his father). ***The Idiot***, a tale of otherness and the search for faith, manifests itself throughout the play.

The father's state of decomposition grows critical. Amé is fed up and wants to ditch the body. Wilfrid argues with his father and with the Knight. The others each have their own story of abandonment to tell—this is what they resolved they will do, to leave this land and go somewhere where they will tell their stories (i.e. Québec)—and they have adopted Wilfrid's father as their own, and thus feel they have an equal say in where he is buried. As Wilfrid tires and weakens they maintain the quest. There is a moment of theatrical brilliance where the actor playing the father speaks as each of the group's various fathers. Mouawad here avoids the trap of absolving each of the characters for their guilt. There are no easy solutions, no band-aids for grief. They must deal with their loss or sense of abandonment in their own way.

Wilfrid allies with Joséphine, the most focused and also the most lost of all the characters. She does not know how she can carry on carrying and preserving the telephone books. He does not know what place will serve as a resting place for his Father, who, in a series of powerful recitations, gives voice to his fears of drifting away:

> I don't want my body to drift away. I don't want to drift away. I don't want to."
> (Mouawad 2002, 156)
> ---
> I'm the boat whose lookout is shouting "Land".
> Now it's my appointed time to dock at the harbour.
> But with no anchor to keep me from drifting, my heart fills with terror." (Mouawad 2002, 160)

The tone is reminiscent of Racine, but no less powerful for that; Mouawad's cultural references are almost all classical (the father also refers to Homer's *Odyssey*).

The quests come together. Wilfrid's father will find the bottom of the sea, weighted down with the

telephone books, finding not only a home that has always been part of his home but a vocation as the "keeper of flocks", the steward and custodian of the names in the directories. Wilfrid says his goodbyes to the Knight Guiromelan is a surprisingly touching scene:

> KNIGHT You summoned me, Wilfrid?
> WILFRID Yes.
> KNIGHT I know what you want to tell me.
> WILFRID I know you know.
> KNIGHT So there's no need to say it.
> WILFRID I need to say it.
> KNIGHT It's merely going to hurt me.
> WILFRID Too bad.
> KNIGHT It's over then?
> WILFRID Yes. It's over.
> KNIGHT You've grown up. Don't cry.
> WILFRID I'm not crying. It's just life stinging my eyes. (Mouawad 2002, 160-1)

The father's journey is complete, and with its completion. Wilfrid can begin his own, overdue journey. There is no whimsically happy ending as with ***Bombay Black***, nor is everything more or less the same as it once was, as in ***The Rez Sisters***. Everything has changed; Wilfrid is now an orphan. He will make his way alone, or accompanied, always essentially alone; but he will make his way.

The three plays examined here deal with many aspects of cultural *otherness*. They share a Canadian patriation but not a Canadian heritage, and perhaps that is what is most Canadian about each of these plays. For Canada is a homeland which encompasses many homelands, not in an ideal or egalitarian manner, certainly, but in a manner which one can be grateful allows for the significant voices of these playwrights and the cultural communities they represent to be heard.

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