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**The Indigenous Identity between Marginalization and Retrieval
in Selected American, Canadian, and Australian Plays**

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Introduction

The representation of the Indigenous identity in American, Canadian, and Australian drama is as old as Indigenous theatres themselves. However, contemporary Indigenous playwrights play a remarkable role in creating a realistic portrait of the Indigenous life. Not only do the Indigenous playwrights shed light on the Indigenous culture and identity, but, more importantly, they attempt to defy colonialism, racism, and marginalization for the sake of identity retrieval. This dissertation explores the challenges that the Indigenous identity faces, and investigates the attempts of identity retrieval as portrayed by the Indigenous playwrights. The thesis depicts selected plays from America, Canada, and Australia. From America, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr.'s *The Independence of Eddie Rose* (1999) and Diane Glancy's *American Gypsy* (2002) are explored. Drew Hayden Taylor's *400 Kilometres* (2009) and Marie Clements's *Copper Thunderbird* (2010) are tackled as representatives from Canada; whereas Tammy Anderson's *I Don't Wanna Play House* (2002) and Richard Frankland's *Conversations with the Dead* (2002) are dealt with from Australia.

The reason for selecting these plays is to explore my argument regarding the devastated state of the Indigenous identity under the impact of both colonialism and racism which have the core role in its oppression and marginalization. These texts reflect the dominant environments in which the Indigenous people live and how this affects their Indigenous identity. Further, they explore the Indigenous people's struggles and their forms of resistance in order to reclaim their culture and history. More importantly, they offer a range of dramatic strategies for retrieving the lost Indigenous identity.

The retrieval of Indigenous identity is the central theme of this study. Thus, and drawing on postcolonial theories, the dissertation approaches this subject through the works of prominent contemporary Indigenous playwrights from America, Canada, and Australia explored in three chapters.

In the two Native American plays analyzed in Chapter One entitled *The Subaltern Finally Speaks*, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr. and Diane Glancy have made a distinct contribution towards retrieving the Native American identity in their plays: *The Independence of Eddie Rose* and *American Gypsy*, respectively. In these plays, the playwrights present Native American characters who challenge silence, marginalization, and subalternity so that their voice would be heard. The characters embody courage, independence, and persistence to survive in spite of colonial and racial abuses.

The Aboriginal Canadian plays, *400 Kilometres* and *Copper Thunderbird* by Drew Hayden Taylor and Marie Clements explored in Chapter Two: *Struggling Against Racial Binaries* have displayed the Aboriginal Canadian identity retrieval through breaking the prevailing myth of the European superior Self as opposed to the Aboriginal inferior Other. Each play presents Aboriginal Canadian characters who resist white social norms and culture in order to reach self-realization and restore their selfhood.

Chapter Three: *Retrieving the Lost Identity* highlights varying strategies which Tammy Anderson and Richard Frankland suggest that the Aboriginal Australians should employ as a primary way to retrieve their lost identity in the dramatic texts: *I Don't Wanna Play House* and *Conversations with the Dead*. Both plays are transferred to the stage from trauma personally experienced by their playwrights. Despite this agonizing memory, each playwright clarifies what Aboriginal identity means and why it is important to retrieve and perpetuate it.

America, Canada, and Australia have been chosen among other colonized countries for three reasons: first, they were occupied by Europeans-representatives of the issues facing in this study; second, they contain the largest populations of Indigenous people in comparison with other colonized countries (Cole Harris 79); and third, they have witnessed the appearance of a surging number of Indigenous playwrights who celebrate their ancient Indigenous culture, traditions, arts, as well as language and formidably dramatize them in their works.

Indigenous people who lived in America (known as Native Americans or American Indians), Canada (called the First Peoples or Aboriginals of Canada), and Australia (referred to as Aboriginals, Aboriginal Australians, or Aborigines) for thousands of years had their own identity, lifestyle, language, culture, and religion which were characterized by simplicity and belonging to the land. However, the arrival of the colonizers changed their life. The Indigenous populations were forcibly driven out and they suffered a lot of massacres and diseases that threatened their identity, population, and culture. Subsequently, they were marginalized as sub-human and segregated in their own lands.

Colonialism causes confiscation of land and resources, dispersion and marginalization of the inhabitants, devastating their identity and existence, and creating stolen and traumatic generations as described by Carole Pateman: "colonialism in general subordinates, exploits, kills, rapes, and makes maximum use of the colonized and their resources and lands" (38). This is quite the contrary of the objectives they claim: protecting these populations. When the European explorers landed on America, Canada, or Australia, they convinced the world that their mission was to civilize and to purify these wretched peoples from barbarity. Shelley Walia exposes this strategic plan of colonialism: "Colonialism is accompanied by exploitation, annexation and conquest. Its hegemonic power rests on creating the binary opposition of self/other, white/black, good/evil, superior/inferior, and so on. Thus a part of the world was able to enjoy supremacy because it convinced the rest of the world about the white man's burden and his civilizing machine" (77). Unlike their mottos, the moment they put their foot on these lands, the Europeans declared them colonies under the protection of Europe, leaving the inhabitants subject to suffering, segregation, and marginalization. When talking about the suffering and segregation of colonized peoples, the policies and influences of colonialism cannot be ignored.

To summarize and reflect on the influences of colonialism, there must be a reference to what colonization is. Colonization means establishing colonies. The word colony is derived from "the Roman word "Colonia" which meant 'farm' or

'settlement'" (Loomba 1); therefore, colonization is connected directly to lands and is undertaken for the sake of land as held by Ania Loomba in *Colonialism/ Post Colonialism* when describing the purpose of colonization as "the conquest and control of other people's land and good" (2).

The conquest began during the 1500s when the European powers started their mission of colonization. The Spanish moved towards south and central America. However, America was not the prey of merely Spain, but also of three other European countries: England, France, and Holland. The race to the Americas was due to rapid growth in population, industrial and commercial developments, new trends in learning, and the urgent need of marketing. They occupied America with expectations that their "colony would succeed, and [. . .] America would enter a new era" ("The First Europeans" 3).

The primitive lifestyle of the Aborigines in Canada was not different from America and that was the reason that made the land of the Aboriginal Canadians another easy prey for the European colonists who, because of their expansions economically and commercially, were looking for more fertile lands. Therefore, when they settled, "the Europeans built in Canada a town [. . .] and established a trading" road ("History of Canada" 2).

What happened to the Aborigines of Canada also occurred to the Aboriginal Australians with the onslaught of colonization. During the 1770s, European missions were directed towards Australia, another fertile land inhabited by simple Indigenous people "who have been described alternately as nomadic hunter-gatherers and fire-stick farmers". So, they could be conquered with little efforts ("History of Australia" 1). In this way, America, Canada, and Australia became European colonies. In *Race and Ethnic Relations: American and Global Perspectives*, Martin Marger comments on this as follows:

Native people of color were seen as innately primitive and incapable of reaching the level of civilization attained by Europeans. Economic exploitation was thus neatly rationalized. And, because nonwhites

represented supposedly less human evolutionary phase, the notion of a "white man's burden" arose as justification for imposing European cultural ways on these people. (29)

Those "European cultural ways" were the most dominant oppressive policies imposed on the Indigenous people in the three continents. The first and main policy was confiscation of the land from the Indigenous population. The colonizers saw that the Indigenous populations were so primitive and barbarous to be the owners of such fertile lands. They did not know the real worth of the land for the Indigenous: "Land. If you understand nothing else about the history of Indians . . . , you need to understand that the question that really matters is the question of land" (Camfield and Woroniak 1). This means that the Indigenous population connected spiritually with the land. Therefore, after invasion, the fight was for the land. Due to inappropriateness in weapons, the colonialists won the fights and displaced the Indigenous people into reserves.

The reserves known as "Indian reserves" (see fig. 1) were the most notable signs of segregation in which the Indigenous people were forcibly displaced far away from the towns and cities and they were not allowed to leave the reserves and go to the cities without permission. The reason behind that was, as Katherine Ellinghaus asserts, to have "control over Aboriginal people's lives" (188). In other words, the reserves were the solution to avoid direct contact with the European settlers. They were, as marked by Amanda Nettelbeck and Robert Foster, "a form of protection to settlers" (27). According to the description of Cole Harris, the reserves were small and their people suffered from poverty, neglect, and illness: "small reserves in every way they could . . . [so that] their people would not have enough food and that their progeny had no prospects. The spaces assigned to Native people did not support them" (291). The living conditions in reserves were not good for humans and this emphasizes the point that colonialism was domination and exploitation. Its objective was annihilation of the colonized nations for the interests of its colonizing nation.

To denude the Indigenous populations from anything related to their identity, language, spiritual customs, and traditional heritage, the colonizers utilized the policy of assimilation under the pretext of civilizing and educating these populations. According to Joseph Healey and Eileen O'Brien, assimilation is "a process in which formerly distinct and separate groups come to share a common culture and merge together socially" (43). Accordingly and owing to Richard Pratt's philosophy (see fig. 2) of "kill the Indian, save the man" ("*American Indian Boarding Schools*" 5), the Indigenous children (now known in Australia today as the "Stolen Generations") were forcibly taken from their houses and put in boarding/ residential schools (see fig. 3) which were many miles far from their families and communities where the Europeans taught them the white culture, the English language, and Christianity instead of remaining with their families adopting their Indigenous identity and learning their Aboriginal traditions and customs which were seen as barbaric in the lens of the colonists. So, assimilation was a profoundly cunning step to secure their control over the Indigenous people since their childhood, and not as remarked by Martin Renes a means of protection for them (Indigenous people) as the colonizers claimed: "'Protection' was founded on the Social-Darwinist belief that the Indigenous [people were] doomed to extinction but that mixed Aboriginal descent could be saved and assimilated into white society" (2).

In those schools, the Indigenous children faced various types of abuses physically and spiritually. John Milloy refers to such schools as a place of abuse more than a place of education when he points his finger to the most abusive act: sexual suffering: "neglect, physical and cultural abuse [and] the deepest secret of all—the pervasive sexual abuse of the children. The official files, however, efface the issue almost completely" (296). Due to abuses, those schools created traumatized generations, "[abuses caused] traumatic early childhood experiences, which have had ongoing negative impacts on their development opportunities" ("*Between Two Worlds: Understanding the Stolen Generations*" 19).

In *Discourse on Colonialism*, Aimé Césaire asks: "has colonization really placed civilizations in contact?" (2); then he replies: "I answer no.... No human contact, but relations of domination and submission" (2, 6). Césaire argues that instead of civilization, colonialism places racism between the colonizers and the colonized in the occupied countries and America, Canada, and Australia are no exception.

In its broad and notorious form, racism means the superiority of a race to other races. The colonizers felt superior to the Indigenous populations because of two essences: the first is skin colour. For Loomba, skin colour is "the most important signifier of cultural and racial differences" (109). It is the spark that leads to dividing the people in the conquered lands into two races: the white (Europeans) and the nonwhite (the Indigenous people). These names have become stereotypes for differentiation between the two through time. Homi Bhabha defines stereotype as "a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always 'in place', already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated" ("The Other Question . . ." 18). Stereotypes are created and developed by the colonizers as a means of "subjectification" for those who were different from them in "race, colour and culture" (Bhabha, "The Other Question . . ." 27). They usually concentrate on negative and unfavourable characteristics; therefore, they have a decisive role in deteriorating the identity of the Indigenous population in America, Canada, and Australia. Ronald Takaki gives a hint about how the white people think about the colours of white and black: "the color black was freighted with an array of negative images: "deeply stained with dirt," "foul," "dark or deadly" in purpose, "malignant," while the color white on the other hand signified purity, innocence, and goodness" (51-52).

Because of skin colour, Audrey Smedley illustrates that "scientists like Carolus Linnaeus and Johann Friedrich Blumenbach classified races into Caucasoid, Mongoloid, Australoid, Negroid, and Indian, and those who were not Caucasoid were seen as different and as a result sub-human" (154). This

classification aroused hostility or negative reactions which is another notion of racism as the historian George Fredrickson posits: " a loose and unreflective way to describe the hostile or negative feelings of one ethnic group or people towards another and the actions resulting from such attitudes" (1). The Europeans' actions against Indigenous populations were crimes against humanity taking their support from the power they had.

As a result, power is the second essential element in increasing racism against the Indigenous peoples during the colonial period. Carlos Hoyt Jr. defines power as "the capacity to exert force on or over something or someone"(225). Matthew Jacobsen emphasizes this idea when he argues that power "at specific cultural sites" provided the colonists with the right to practice oppression, control, and destruction upon the Indigenous peoples (11). Further, it deprives the Indigenous peoples from speaking. Therefore, they are subalterns according to Spivak's theory. She defines subalterns as a marginalized group whose identity is defined in terms of the dominant group. They are not part of that dominant group and they cannot have access to any privileges. The voice of the subalterns cannot be heard ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 26-27).

As a matter of fact, not only did the Indigenous population suffer because of racism but also the Indigenous children faced traumatic experiences at boarding/residential schools during the policy of assimilation.

It can be argued that assimilation was a facet of racism since its goal was to eliminate Indigenous identity, culture, heritage, language, and even mythology from childhood: "The forceful removal of children from their families was, at that time, a lawful governmental practice intended to destroy Indigenous social and cultural identity" (Wesley-Esquimaux 52). This European wish came true when the children grew up ashamed of their identity, heritage, language, culture, and worse ashamed of themselves, as Césaire in an interview with Réne Depestre bitterly explains, "the atmosphere in which we lived, an atmosphere of assimilation in which Negro people were ashamed of themselves--has great importance. We lived in an atmosphere of rejection, and we developed an

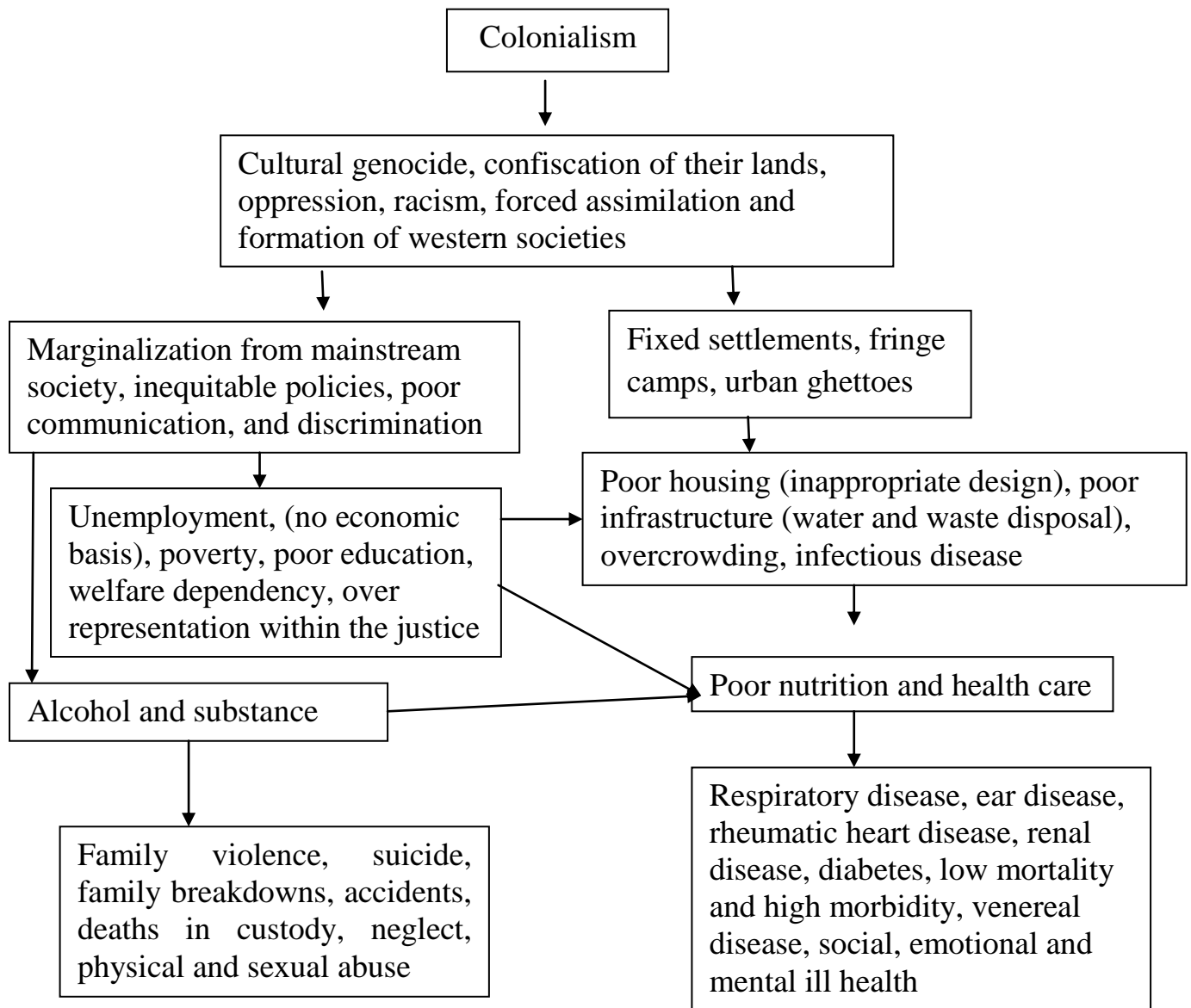
inferiority complex" (30). The "inferiority complex" was felt even by the Indigenous adults the moment they were put in Indian reserves which were "initially set up as a way of controlling Indigenous people by restricting them to defined areas and paving the way for European settlers to take over these lands. . . Although not established by churches, reserves were often administered by them and eventually controlled by them" (Davis 3).

In both reserves and schools, Indigenous populations - children and adult, and individually and collectively - "have consistently been 'othered', marginalized and discriminated against" (Loppie, Reading, and Leeuw 2) in their lands, that is, in America, Canada, and Australia. The concept of Other stands for all Indigenous peoples who are too degraded and inhuman to be equal with the European Self and to be credited with the same whites' supremacy, dignity, and privileges. This has led to the construction of many racial binaries between colonial superior Self and colonized inferior Other.

Certainly, colonialism and racism with their agents and strategies could not be practiced on Indigenous populations without leaving their detrimental mark and causing unforgettable negative consequences. The two most destructive colonial strategies, the Indian reserves and boarding/residential schools, established in America, Canada, and Australia, have had destructive social and physical impacts on the Indigenous populations. In the "Indian reserves", the Indigenous people were left with no resources to earn money. They were obliged to resort to illegal and morally corrupt ways to get money. Therefore, life on these reserves was characterized by poverty, aggression, hate, segregation, and domestic violence. The difficult situations which Indigenous men were put in led to either their abandonment of their women and children, or their addiction to alcoholism and subsequent violence against their families. In both cases, there is a broken family inside Indigenous communities. Indigenous children's life in boarding/residential schools was not different from that lived by their families. Indian schools were places of sexual violence and physical abuse as pointed out by A. Tanner

"[depending on] the claims of the survivors of residential schools that they have suffered violent cultural oppression as well as physical and sexual abuse" (251). Moreover, the location of the schools far away from families and the location of reserves far away from cities had major negative effects on Indigenous children and families. It created a sense of segregation and marginalization caused by loss of freedom which in turn generated alienation and trauma (Tanner 252). This phase of history has been etched deep in the memory of the majority of Indigenous peoples. Such traumatic memories about the past affect the Indigenous peoples' present and shape their identity.

In *Black Skin, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon refers to the problem of lack of confidence among Indigenous populations and attributes this problem to racism that places the white at the top of the pyramid, thus, making the rest of humankind inferior (35). Therefore, Fanon divides the Indigenous populations into groups, "[the Indigenous person] who wants to turn his race white is as miserable as he who preaches hatred for the whites" (2), that is to say, those who submit to the power of assimilation to be like the white, and those who resist and refuse the white culture. Both groups stand on the same level in the lens of the world because they are Indigenous populations. L. B. Whitebeck et al. demonstrate that the dispossession of their land and prohibition from practicing their spiritual rituals and using their language, and their eventual sense of displacement all negatively "impact on the psychological well-being of" the Indigenous populations as well as affect their mental health and cause historical trauma which triggers the feelings of anger and depression (121- 123). The diagram below shows the influence of colonialism and racism on Indigenous populations in American, Canada, and Australia (Pattel 11, adopted from Wilkinson, 2002).



The severe destructive consequences of colonialism, whose primary goal is to eliminate Indigenous existence, provide Indigenous populations with unhappy, miserable, and unhealthy life full of segregation, marginalization, and tribulations.

Therefore, the Indigenous writers use their writings as tools for serving their purpose in exploring real life as well as enriching their communities with information that could lead to a better understanding of their culture, identity, and life. The selected Indigenous playwrights from America, Canada, and Australia lead their audience through the process of retrieving and perpetuating the Indigenous identity in their plays.

This dissertation entails identifying causes of Indigenous people's marginalization that affects their culture, history, and identity; exposing their struggles against colonial and racial strategies in order to have an equal place in a world dominated by white people, beginning with challenging negative stereotypes, embracing the traditional Indigenous lifestyle, and finally fighting for independence and selfhood; and depicting Indigenous identity retrieval in the end.

Conclusion

The present study has examined the state of Indigenous identity in Native American, Aboriginal Canadian, and Aboriginal Australian drama for the plays as testimonials of the anguish and disaster that colonialism and racism to marginalized Indigenous people in America, Canada, and Australia.

In each land, the representative playwrights portray in their plays the marginalized state of Indigenous identity as well as the subordinated position of Indigenous people in the white world. Then, they illustrate the Indigenous characters' endeavours to wake Indigenous people to restore their Indigenous culture and traditions through returning to the Indigenous past, history, culture, and language. Finally, they succeed in retrieving the Indigenous identity and dignity. So, the aim of this concluding chapter is to review the similarities and highlight the distinctive features in the playwrights' embodiment of Indigenous identity and culture.

The stories told in each of the selected plays reveal the fear and tribulations of Indigenous people. They are marginalized on their own land. Colonialism and racism have negatively resulted in dismal social conditions, alcohol abuse, anger, domestic violence, and suicide. On the other hand, the stories contain assertive proclamations and actions that repudiate colonialism and racism. The Indigenous playwrights have created texts that demonstrate the desire of the Indigenous characters to retrieve their Indigenous identity.

In the plays by the two Native American playwrights, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr.'s *The Independence of Eddie Rose* and Diane Glancy's *American Gypsy*, the loss of the Native American characters' voices is interrelated with the loss of their freedom and independence which are the inevitable result of the loss of their land. In *The Independence of Eddie Rose*, the three main characters face a dismal reality. Mike falls victim to the corrupted white officer Sam; therefore, he decides to escape. Katherine is marginalized and subordinated twice, first, because she is Native and, second, because she is female, especially because of the absence of

her husband. This leads her to be angry and to drink alcohol all the time. And Eddie is a victim of domestic violence. Similarly, in *American Gypsy*, TiToMo and his friends William, Neville, and Reep are jobless. They spend their life drinking and shooting into the sky. Mildred Forster, TiToMo's mother, escapes racism and subalternity through indulging into the white society, to be identified as white. TiToMo's failure to make a balance between the Native culture and the mainstream culture leads to his death. Peri, like Katherine, is subject to double marginalization.

However, the Native American characters do not accept their devastated conditions, but they resist subalternity and marginalization. Thelma and Frennie remind the Native American characters and awaken the Native American people to the fact that salvation and retrieval of their identity lie in returning to the past and reviving their Native American heritage and traditions. Therefore, the Native Americans Eddie, Mike, Katherine, TiToMo, Frennie, and Peri are transformed from subaltern subjects into independent ones. Through their plays, *Yellow Robe* and *Glancy* confirm the image of Native Americans as people who are able to defy the notion of subalternity and retrieve their Native American identity.

The two Aboriginal Canadian plays, *400 Kilometres* by Drew Hayden Taylor and *Copper Thunderbird* by Marie Clements, address these issues from a different perspective. The hardship and cruelty inflicted on Aboriginal Canadian characters due to the colonial racial binary of Self/Other drive them to confront European settlers to reveal what is lacking in the Aboriginal Canadian identity in comparison with the white identity.

The Self characters—Lloyd and Theresa Wirth, Auntie, Pollock, and Weinstein—use their superiority to marginalize the Other characters—Tonto, Janice/Grace, and Morrissette—through the use of stereotypes and the colonial policies of assimilation and adoption. Therefore, in Taylor's *400 Kilometres*, the encounter between Tonto and the Wirth family is tense. The Wirths want to maintain their position as essential central Self and keep Tonto in his marginal inferior position because he is Aboriginal. On the contrary, Tonto struggles to

break the whites' desire till he succeeds in the end. Similarly, in Clements's *Copper Thunderbird*, the white Auntie exploits Morrisseau's alcohol abuse to highlight his inferiority. She further uses abusive stereotypes in describing him and his paintings. But Morrisseau in the end proves that he is in the equal position as any white man.

The interaction between the white and Aboriginal characters incarnates the first encounter between colonized Other and colonizer Self, Aboriginal values and European ideologies, and Aboriginal heritage and white culture. But, Taylor and Clements, exemplified here, take the responsibility of refuting the dominant theme that the Aboriginal Other is in need of the European Self. In both plays, the dilemma of Aboriginal characters concerning their desire to retrieve their identity is that they do not understand what Aboriginal identity means. This dilemma makes Janice/Grace and Morrisseau submissive, dependent, and Colonial copies. In the end, they face this dilemma when they realize that their Aboriginal identity can be retrieved by returning to the cultural heritage of their past and history where they can find their Aboriginal culture which defies the policies of colonialism as well as any colonial image of them.

In Taylor's play, Janice/ Grace is convinced that her real home is Otter Lake Reserve where her family, people, and culture are. Therefore, she informs her adoptive family that her coming baby must be raised in the heart of great Ojibway culture and traditions. In the same vein, Clements' play ends with Morrisseau's confidence in himself as he is honoured with the title of the great Shaman of the Ojibway which is a spiritual ritual according to Ojibway traditions, as well as in his art and paintings which are as great as Picasso's. Consequently, these two cases are a remarkable reference to the collapse of Self/Other racial binary and a sign of retrieving Aboriginal identity and restoring selfhood.

Callous white violence depicted in intense black drama appears closely related to the Aboriginal Australian playwrights' attempts to reveal the fabricated colonial history. Both Tammy Anderson's *I Don't Wanna Play House* and Richard Frankland's *Conversations with the Dead* portray the white oppressive past which

is not included in the mainstream history through real experiences etched in the memories of their playwrights. Anderson's *I Don't Wanna Play House* depicts the dispossession, discrimination, and poverty inflicted on Tammy's family that has led to the father's alcoholism and jailing, the mother's smoking and alcoholism, and Tammy's smoking and sexual abuses. In Frankland's *Conversations with the Dead*, colonialism and its racial policies that have divided Australians into two racial categories based on skin colour, white and black, do not protect the black from unjust jailing, death, alcoholism, and suicide. Employed by the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody, Jack converses with several dead black characters: David, Peter, Uncle, and Joe as well as their families. Through his conversations, Jack makes plain how colonialism fails to protect Aboriginal Australians from its own injustice unlike its mottos of education, civilization, and progress.

Anderson and Frankland who portray marginalization and racism, on the one hand, create Aboriginal characters who make a journey to find their lost Aboriginal identity, on the other hand. Tammy and Jack return to nature, to their history so as to remind the Aboriginal Australians of the significance of past in forming the Aboriginal identity and as a means to change the destiny of black Australian towards better.

To awaken the suppressed Aboriginal culture in Australia, music, singing, and dancing are utilized in both plays. As a result, the plays end with smile, laughter, optimism, and hope.

Although the six Indigenous plays in this study can be read as an indictment of colonialism and its aggressive policies, of European racist treatment towards Indigenous people in America, Canada, and Australia, and the attempts of the latter to struggle against these racial strategies so as to retrieve their Indigenous identity and culture, that reading shifts into different patterns according to how the plays construct, first, the relationships between the European characters and the Indigenous characters, second, the awareness by the Indigenous characters of the disaster of dispossession, assimilation, marginalization, subalternity, and racial

binaries, and, third, the means of resistance to put an end to their marginalization and subalternity. Major distinctive features have been found in the way the Indigenous playwrights embody the Indigenous desire of retrieving the lost Indigenous identity in which their plays are set.

For the Native American plays by Yellow Robe and Glancy, the Native American characters break the barriers of subalternity when they break their fear and attack the white law and its offices. In *The Independence of Eddie Rose*, Mike hits the white officer Sam and smashes the windows of the police office. In *American Gypsy*, TiToMo breaks the white laws as he shoots at the stars. The Native American characters muster their courage to defy the white law and its institutions from their spiritual power.

In addition, actual practices of Native rituals which represent Native American heritage and traditions are portrayed. Thelma in Yellow Robe, Jr.'s *The Independence of Eddie Rose* burns her hair and washes herself with its smoke. Then she tells Eddie to wash himself. After that, she prays an Indian prayer before him and asks him to do so. These acts rebuild Eddie's Native identity. So, in his turn, Eddie teaches them to Mike and Katherine and that leads to their independence and identity retrieval. In Glancy's *American Gypsy*, there is an actual shape transformation in the character of Frennie into a chicken which is a Native spiritual power. This feature encourages Peri to be more attached to her Native identity and thus to be independent after TiToMo's death.

In Canada, Drew Hayden Taylor and Marie Clements (both are from Ojibway clan) use the Ojibway language in their plays which is a bold choice. It is a very powerful announcement of collapsing Self/Other racial binaries. Further, by using the Ojibway language, Taylor and Clements give a sense of coherence and integration which allows Aboriginal people in Canada to restore their dignity and retrieve their Aboriginal identity.

In the Aboriginal Canadian plays, there is an actual and unique confession of Aboriginal identity. In Taylor's *400 Kilometres*, the availability of a book (published and produced by white Canadians) talking about the history of

Aboriginal Canadians brought by the Wirths to Janice/Grace helps in the creation her Aboriginal identity. Also, in Clements's *Copper Thunderbird*, Picasso's appreciation of Morrisseau and his fine arts indicates that Morrisseau has established his place in an art world dominated by white Canadians who approach him with an air of superiority. Picasso's description of Morrisseau as "Picasso of the woods" (Clements 74) is a reference to the destruction of Self/Other racial binaries.

Aboriginal Australian plays defy colonialism and racism as the Aboriginal Australian characters overcome the severe environment and make changes so as to survive. In the case of Tammy in Tammy Anderson's *I Don't Wanna Play House*, despite childhood sexual abuse inflicted on her in addition to the abusive stereotypes attributed to her—because she is black, she liberates herself by working. She finds a job, earns money, and even buys a car despite marginalization and this is something marvelous for Aboriginal lives in the white world. Similarly, in Richard Frankland's *Conversations with the Dead*, Jack is presented as an employee for the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custardy. Finding a job and working in white institutions are a turning point in the Aboriginal history in Australia. Through depicting Aboriginal characters with jobs in the white world, Anderson and Frankland emphasize the notion that Aboriginal identity is not marginalized as before.

Underlying the distinguishing variations between the Indigenous plays from America, Canada, and Australia, there are dialogues, monologues, and action and body language in each play which combine to create Indigenous characters who not only challenge the stereotypes of Indigenous identity but also awaken more Indigenous people to revive their identity and perpetuate it instead of assimilating into the white identity and culture.

In addition to creating strong texts as well as performance materials, the six Indigenous playwrights hope to give opportunities and even invitations to audiences Indigenous or non-Indigenous alike to turn away from the entrenched stereotypes about the Indigenous history, culture, and identity. Their plays provide

a conceptual framework of Indigenous identity recognizable in the powerful stories and memorable characterization. Hence, it is hoped that this dissertation, through its detailed examination of the six Indigenous plays from the three colonized nations, America, Canada, and Australia, may also serve to further reinforce the opportunities for understanding what Indigenous identity is as a result of these invitations.