CONCLUSION

Post-colonial literature highlights the problem of the suppressed and the marginalized women in many countries. After World War II and especially in the post-1960s, women writers in Canada began to assert more consciously the authenticity of their feminine sensibility through their works. The women writers in Canada tried to evolve a feminine discourse that was different from and opposed to the patriarchal discourse. The women's movement in the 1960's acted as a catalyst to generate a greater awareness of the need for self-definition and self-assertion among Canadian women writers. M.F. Salat observes, “The Suffrage Movement of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century in Canada gave a further fillip to the already extant literary ambitions of women and can be said to account for the significant, if not dominant, female literary tradition in Canada”. (62).

The feminist movement helped to release Canadian women from many of the restrictions in the male-dominated society. Canadian women writers portrayed the aspirations and ambitions of the “new woman” and her yearnings for independence and liberation from the limiting constraints of the conventions - ridden society.

Feminist theatre in Canada like other genres of feminist literature
retrieves women from the constraints imposed on them in the realm of politics, family and society. Canada had witnessed a fair share of women playwrights in 1970's who have made significant contributions to the growth of Canadian drama. Some of the playwrights who contributed to the development of Canadian drama are Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock, Margaret Hollingsworth, Erika Ritter, Anne Chislett, Judith Thompson, Beaverly Simons, Elinore Siminovitch and Aviva Ravel.

The gender-politics constitute a major thrust and an overriding preoccupation in the works of Canadian women playwrights. They question the gender roles and protest against patriarchal structures of power and dominion that subsume and expropriate the woman’s identity. The Canadian women playwrights’ search for a distinctive identity within a predominantly feminist framework, explore and expose the male will to power and iterates the need to resist hegemonic and homogenizing patriarchal power-structures. Pankaj. K. Singh comments about the feminist drama, "It allows the woman to narrate and act her own story and be no longer an object of man’s narration, her body is projected not as an object of male gaze but as it is subjected to stress and strain, use and abuse, her point of view which has been negated so far is allowed centrality". (175).
In emerging as a significant and unignorable literary force in the post-sixties, Canadian women’s drama challenged not only the traditionally supreme male authority but also challenged the marginalization of women in society. These women playwrights protested against the de-humanization of woman in the patriarchal power structure and wanted to re-humanize woman in their writing by locating her as a central figure on the stage. The performance of a feminist text thus empowers the hitherto marginalized woman to make a live presentation of her life on stage. The female body which has been misrepresented or marginalized on the Canadian stage in traditional drama now holds the centre stage.

Unlike the traditional Canadian drama which presents a dominant ideology and keeps the dissenting voices subdued, ‘feminist’ drama presents a resistant critique of dominant ideology which voices out the problems of women. These feminist playwrights try to rewrite their scripts by uncovering and interpreting the voices and experiences of women. The Canadian women playwrights are motivated by the expression of feminism and try to transfer notions of gender discrimination into their aesthetics. K. Santhanam comments, “Feminist theatre questions the imposition of patriarchal value on women and tries to explore the nature of the female world and thereby reconstruct the lost or
suppressed feelings of female experience". The plays of 1970's produced an aesthetic awakening and made Canadian audiences more receptive to the omnipresent female vision. The plays paved the way for more authentic depictions of women which included the negative feelings of anger, frustration and a yearning for a change.

The present study examines the selected plays of three contemporary women playwrights Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth in terms of their treatment of women's issues and showed how the female protagonists in these plays challenged the patriarchal values imposed on them by the society and succeeded in carving their own path leading to their empowerment. These playwrights represent the first generation of women playwrights who succeeded in their efforts to articulate their own voice in theatre. The study of these plays reveals remarkable similarities in these playwrights' attitude and vision in portraying their women protagonists' search for identity. These playwrights have succeeded in capturing the transitional phase of the rapidly changing roles of contemporary women in Canada. The examination of the works of these playwrights has shed light on several aspects unnoticed so far by other critics.
The three playwrights Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth discard the patriarchal notion of women as mere emotional beings and argue that women can succeed in traditionally male centred realms. The plays which are explored in this study clearly expose the exploitation that women undergo in male-dominated society. These playwrights try to achieve a non-hierarchical egalitarian social structure which would guarantee individual fulfilment to all women. The protagonists in their plays express their needs and desires in predominantly androcentric milieu. These protagonists try to find a viable alternative to come out of their oppressive state to attain freedom. The protagonists of these three playwrights by rebelling against the patriarchal control have succeeded in creating a space for themselves. All the three playwrights offer social criticism by pointing out the social ills of the society. Their women protagonists acquire empowerment in different spheres. While women protagonists in Carol Bolt’s plays assert their female identity in political sphere, the protagonists of Sharon Pollock’s plays assert their will and power in the familial sphere. The protagonists of Margaret Hollingsworth’s plays succeed in acquiring female empowerment in the midst of oppressive social conventions operating in society. Yvonne Hodkinson comments about these feminist plays,
Plays such as these express the historical entrapment of women in a male-oriented society, but do so in an attempt to comprehend female experience in a modern context. It is revealing that so many feminist plays deals with historical settings and figures. Most of the playwrights begin with unraveling women’s past as a first step to understanding present day Canadian women. (14).

This analysis reveals the empowerment of women protagonists in the realms of politics, family and society. Carol Bolt’s Red Emma and Shelter deal with the struggles of the women protagonists in the male-dominated political sphere. Bolt has combined historical, political and women’s issues in her plays. Bolt has portrayed how the main issues affected women in politics and how they encountered their problems in the political sphere by articulating their own ideas and achieving success. Bolt’s plays voices her perception of gender based inequalities in contemporary Canadian society and its deleterious dimensions which restrict and hamper the growth of women protagonists. Bolt portrays the feminist quest of the women characters in her plays Red Emma and Shelter. In Red Emma the protagonist Emma undertakes the quest for autonomy in politics disregarding the prejudices and unjust expectations of a resisting society. Emma struggles to achieve freedom from the unjust and
suffocating gender discrimination cultivated in patriarchal society. The woman protagonist Emma begins her life as a young anarchist and she struggles to change the existing society.

Emma’s journey towards wholeness and self-fulfilment is therefore beset with unforeseen conflicts and calamities in political sphere. Bolt charts with remarkable insight Emma’s responses and reactions to the hurdles in the path and her turbulent onward plodding along the untaken road towards freedom from the male-dominated society. The play depicts the aspirations and frustrations of Emma who fails to conform to the conventional pattern of life prescribed by the biased society. The play examines many political issues in conjunction with Emma’s search for identity. Emma tries to achieve an integral feeling of belonging in the anarchic movement and attempts to acquire recognition of her own powers in politics. Vincent B.Leitch comments about feminist critics, “whatever their disagreements on politics and on critical theory, most Feminist critics remained steadfast in their commitment to an “ideology” based on gender and in their dedication to a political project aimed at social change.” (317).

The feminist quest for alternatives to women’s traditional position provokes Emma to choose politics and strive for success. Even though she displays her ingenuousness in the early stage of her role in
the anarchic movement, she learns about the role of anarchy in transforming the lives of individuals. The study and interpretation of all facets’s of Emma’s life and experiences reveal that she refuses to be subdued and oppressed by male domination. Emma opposes the traditional views about the role of women in politics. Her progress towards self-maturation gives her confidence and a clear insight to oppose the domination of women in politics. Emma by rejecting the stereotype roles which assigns domestic work achieves the intellectual independence. Thus the play portrays the transitional phase in Emma’s career where she attempts to remove a tyrant in the oppressive society. Emma by handling the political issues well in politics challenges the men in anarchic movement.

As a feminist play Red Emma reveals the oppression of women in the world of politics and how Emma succeeds in her attempt to move from the conventional way of life represented by women in society to the progressive feminist liberation projected by feminist critics. Carol Bolt offers social criticism in the play by pointing out various capitalist issues affecting the labourers in the country and reveals how the protagonist struggles against the oppressive system leading to her empowerment in the realm of politics. In Shelter Bolt’s protagonist Jory attempts to alter the gender constructs to lend an
equal footing and autonomy to women in politics. Jory like Emma strives for freedom to acquire power in the political sphere. She initially faces isolation and domestic oppression after the death of her husband and is unable to articulate a sense of identity. This serves as a pointer to the general theme - ‘Female empowerment’ that one finds in Carol Bolt’s plays. Like the other two playwrights Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth, Bolt traces the process of her protagonists towards female empowerment in her plays. Showalter observes, “when we look at women writers collectively we can see an imagination continuous, the recurrence of certain patterns, themes, problems and images from generation to generation”. (11).

The recognition of her potential and the need for her individual growth leads Jory to enter the world of politics and it sharpens her feminist vision to encounter men in politics. Through her revolutionary election strategies, Jory gains the attention of the public. Her psychological maturation helps her to compete as an independent candidate and thereby she tries to gain identity in the gendered world. Her entry in politics is a challenge to her and she takes up the challenge to compete men in that field. Through the liberating power of the feminist awareness Jory attempts a crusade against ‘marginalization’ of women in politics and succeeds in her attempt by
winning the election. Even though she faces opposition during her campaign, she tries to break the unwholesome silence imposed on her. Like Emma, Jory expresses her hope that she can change the world. The contemporary women playwrights opposed the stifling roles of women in family and politics. Carol Bolt who hails from the same culture explores the empowerment of Jory in the realm of politics. Like Jory, the protagonist Vicky rejects her marriage and sacrifices her personal life for political work. The two women protagonists Jory and Vicky by carving their political agendas challenge the patriarchal power structure and marginalization of women leading to their empowerment. With the invigorated sense of power they assert their identity. Bolt has discussed both social and women's issues in her plays. Bolt scrutinises the dynamics of 'politics' with respect to the feminist concept of liberation from patriarchal power structure and marginalization of women in society.

The focus on feminist drama brings to light the emergence of a prominent playwright, Sharon Pollock on the Canadian theatrical scene in 1970's. Sharon Pollock's three plays - *Blood Relations*, *Whiskey Six Cadenza* and *Doc* reveal that she is a committed woman playwright. Her plays from *Blood Relations* onwards deal with women's issues. A detailed study of the oeuvre of Pollock's plays
reveals that her later works *Blood Relations*, *Whiskey Six Cadenza* and *Doc* explore the politics of family. The feminist movement which emerged as a vigorous political force in the sixties and seventies revolted against gender discrimination in families. It made women conscious of their powerlessness and instilled into them the courage and determination to change it. Thus it had its impact on the works of Sharon Pollock and influenced her to write about the politics of family. Like Carol Bolt, Pollock portrayed her first female protagonist from history and presented the historical material from a female perspective.

The female protagonist Lizzie in *Blood Relations* unwillingly pursues a life of conventional domesticity. Within the social structure of the late-nineteenth century, Lizzie is at the mercy of female stereotypes. Lizzie feels that she is caged due to the oppressive atmosphere in the family. She is contemptuous of the expectations of the society regarding marriage and she rebels against the oppressive atmosphere in the family. She feels isolated within her own family and ill suited to fulfil the role expected of her. This is due to the voice of patriarchy and its tyrannical tendency to prescribe stereotypical gender roles to men and women. The play reveals the progressive development of Lizzie’s psychological maturation in proportion to a steady deterioration and insignificance of male figures and their biased
value system. The birds’ death in the play is a palpable projection and an impressive illustration of patriarchal oppression. Lizzie is charged for the murder of her parents and later acquitted of the murders. Even though the truth is not revealed that ‘Lizzie’ is a murderer, a feminist reading of the play reveals that she is responsible for the murders. The feminist politic of the play is visible in Lizzie’s transformation from repressed daughter to a successful feminist in the Victorian society. Lizzie Borden wants more control over her life than she’s allowed to have by the society and the family in which she finds trapped. The play reveals the restrictions of women’s role in the family imposed by the society and the feminist emphasis on the possibility for transformation to achieve freedom. The obvious issue in the play is the endorsement of female empowerment. Lizzie’s wishes, conventions, her value towards life and her aim to achieve freedom provokes her to murder her parents and thereby she gains freedom in the family leading to her empowerment.

In Whiskey Six Cadenza the central protagonist Leah as Lizzie Borden confronts her authoritarian father when his control over her life becomes intolerable. When Leah begins her life, she experiences a sense of loss due to her misery. She limits her role in the family as a chosen daughter to Mr. Big. She is forced to take up the
unconventional life in Big’s family. Pollock portrays how the authoritarian regulation destroys freedom of choice and how Leah attempts to overcome her problems. The autocratic behaviour of Big and his relationship to the women in the family reveals the truth that women’s power of choice in the family is limited. The play portrays the struggle of Leah to free herself from her father, who represents corruption in the outside world. Pollock depicts a symbolic revolution whereby Leah overthrows the patriarchal throne and confronts the limited power of women in the family.

Leah envisions a revolution in the family by rebelling against her father to assert her individual power. Pollock portrays the struggle of Leah against the oppressive patriarchal power structure and how Leah achieves a state of true autonomy through the freedom of choice leading to her empowerment in family. Sharon Pollock as a social playwright portrayed the social evils in the play prohibition, temperance and sexual abuse. Pollock’s examination of the politics of family brings out personal and family related conflicts, which help the female protagonist Leah to go through the process of empowerment. As in Blood Relations and Whiskey Six Cadenza in Doc there is an overt feminist dimension. The play explores the concomitant quest for self affirmation experienced by the women characters Catherine and
Bob. The play reveals Bob's disembodiment from her family through isolation, loneliness and lack of power due to her husband’s neglect of the family. Bob's insecure life in the male-dominated society makes her an alcoholic. Bob is trapped in the patriarchal power structure and ultimately gives in to patriarchal authority. Her daughter Catherine, the feisty and unconventional daughter struggles against the patriarchal power structure and leaves her father.

Catherine by rejecting the conventional role of wife and mother identifies her own individuality. When her family trappings threaten Catherine, she succeeds in getting out leading to her empowerment. Gender is a crucial determinant not only in social relationships but also in familial references as well. It affects the very core and foundation of all human connections, familial as well as non-familial and is detrimental to the aspirations and ambitions of women. The patriarchal power structure and marginalization of women in the family remains the focus of attention of Sharon Pollock to bring out women’s autonomy and power. All the women protagonists in these plays discard the patriarchal notion of women and refuse to be suppressed by male domination and thereby they acquire empowerment in the familial sphere.
The feminist movement sought equal rights and opportunities for women in private and public life. The activists fought against the patriarchal apartheid practiced in the domestic front and in society. The women playwright Margaret Hollingsworth who emerged in the 1970's, by comprehending the antithetical and progressive points of view portrays the aspirations of her women protagonists in her plays. She has attempted to write about isolation, loneliness and frustration which affected her women protagonists in society and how they emerge braver, stronger and more admirable than their partners. They search for their roots and their rights in the society. *Islands* and *Ever Loving* explore the corruption of civilization and the demands of patriarchal society, which affected women and how women try to flee from that to define themselves in a situation outside social roles and expectation.

In *Islands* the woman protagonist Muriel who is uncertain about her identity within the society and her family moves to an island and finds the untamed island a stimulating setting in which she can project her inner self. Muriel's experiment with Science and Technology to make the plants grow in her farm is a deliberate attempt to reject the conventional world to acquire the recognition of her powers in the society. By refusing marriage and motherhood out of
fear of losing autonomy, she has withdrawn herself from the mainstream society. Muriel achieves her female identity by embracing farming operations in the island leading to her empowerment. Hollingsworth attempted to change the social and psychological patterns which oppressed the protagonist Muriel and portrayed how Muriel struggled to relieve herself from the gender discrimination in the society. Thus Muriel seeks autonomy and female identity that leads her to acquire empowerment.

*Ever Loving* explores the estrangement and disorientation faced by three war brides who came to Canada to join their husbands. The play traces different levels of female experience of three women distorted by patriarchal conditioning. They find that the society and their husbands do not offer them protection and security. They are assuming their husband’s identities and social status. The woman protagonist Diana scrutinizes her lack of power and exclusion from the society and tries to construct her own ‘space’. Diana who appeared helpless and powerless in the new environment, later on questions her husband Paul and struggles against the society which oppresses her. By involving herself in various committees and with her farming operations she struggles to improve the economic condition of the region resulting in her empowerment in society. The protagonist Ruth
is isolated and marginalized due to her husband Dave's social milieu. As an immigrant woman she becomes the victim of the patriarchal society in Canada. Through the act of self-expression about her unequal position in the society, Ruth achieves female empowerment.

The protagonist Luce differs from the other two women immigrants in her belief in getting female autonomy. She rejects her marriage and motherhood to become singer in New York. She breaks out of the patriarchal enclosure by rejecting the conventional life imposed on her that helps her to gain access into English Canadian society, leading to her empowerment. All the three women protagonists realise that they are trapped in the conventional society. By charting out their own independent career and life, they achieve a sense of autonomy resulting in their empowerment in society.

Margaret Hollingsworth tries to explore the alienation and exclusion of women trapped in the male-dominated Canadian society. She reflects the socio-cultural changes taking place in Canadian life, inspired and informed by the ideology and objectives of the feminist movement.

As women writers and true Canadian artists Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth in their struggle to decolonize the mind, have challenged the dominant, male British / American traditions. The playwrights who are inspired by the
liberating power of feminist awareness, made their women protagonists to rebel against the patriarchal control. However their vision reveals the belligerent protest of the women protagonists against the oppressive system in politics, family and society.

In their search for self-definition within the Canadian literary quest for identity, the three playwrights give a new dimension to Canadian theatre by interweaving various issues like marginalization of women, patriarchal power structure and the oppressive conventional system that affect women in politics, family and society into a dramatic female vision. The struggle for survival in a male-defined environment, exemplifies the women protagonists marginally and their search for social integration. Patriarchal social milieu in the plays leads the women protagonists to self-deprecating acceptance of masculine definitions against which women struggle for their individuality. All the three playwrights strive to enlarge female consciousness by voicing challenges to the conditions and traditions which have often alienated women from the mainstream of Canadian life. The uniqueness of their works reveals their faith in the value of women and the conviction that they must question and clarify the assumptions about their position within the conventional frameworks of society.
Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth through the process of writing plays from a female perspective have challenged the accepted, male vision of society and provoked the transformation that will expand women’s traditionally limited role in Canadian drama. This metamorphosis leads to a complete vision of ‘Female Empowerment’ the central theme of this research in Canadian women’s drama in 1970s. These playwrights’ aesthetic expression projects a vision that is rooted in multi-levels to bring out the limitations of censorship and masculine bias. This period of transition requires a shift in their consciousness. Hollingsworth observes, about women playwrights involvement in Canadian drama, “The playwright is required to fight for her ideas and defend them in the forum of workshops, rehearsals and after the production in the media”. (22).

As women writers and true Canadian artists Carol Bolt, Sharon Pollock and Margaret Hollingsworth in their struggle to decolonize the mind have challenged the dominant, male British / American traditions. The women protagonists of these playwrights assert their identity in multiple realms- politics, family and society that leads them to acquire female empowerment.
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Canadian women playwrights epitomize the female literary search for an 'authentic language'. The female struggle for self-definition was apparent in the medium of drama due to its public nature since it was dominated by male domain. The socio-political repercussions have kept women silenced, carefully tucked away in a domestic cocoon. In this state of inertia, the medium of drama was seen as too powerful, too spontaneous an expression for women who were conditioned to keep their feelings and ideals under control. The socio-political burdens which weighed heavily on the artistic consciousness of creative women throughout the ages stifled the female imagination leading to a lack of women playwrights. The nineteenth century quest for a national identity gave impetus to a new feminist consciousness.

The first group of Canadian women playwrights emerged in 1970's and succeeded in their career to present their vision on Canadian stage. The present study dealt with these playwrights and explored the status of women in Canada and on the Canadian stage. The first group of women playwrights paved a way for the emergence of the second generation women playwrights. Other up and coming female writers are making their mark - dramatists like Suzazze Finlay, Margo Kane, Deborah Porter etc. The artists-run companies and fringe
theatres are ready to workshop and stage new plays by unknown women playwrights. The voices of women are becoming stronger and their presence on the Canadian stage is increasing. If audience support theatres when they introduce plays by Canadian women, if more women directors are given an opportunity and more artistic directors welcome the work of female artists; if women protagonists can keep their vision fresh and voice distinctive, then the perception the professional women playwrights presence can be felt on the Canadian stage. This will help the Canadian theatre to reflect the integral perception of its playwrights. In this public arena, women’s presence must be recognized and consolidated to make the women’s drama more effective on the stage.