CONCLUSION

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Pre-existence, non-dominance, cultural differences and self-identification are four major elements in the internationally accepted definition of indigenous people. "Indigenous peoples descended from a country's aboriginal population and who today are completely or partly deprived of the right to their own territories and its riches" have been described as the Fourth World by the Shuswap Chief George Manuel in his work *The Fourth World: An Indian Reality* (1974). According to Richard Griggs it consists of the 5,000 to 6000 "internationally unrecognized nations" [...] which "represent[s] a third of the world's population". Distinguishing them from ethnic minorities Noel Dyck's 1985 publication, *Indigenous Peoples and the Nation-State* conceives of the Fourth World as "minority population that have no hope of ever prevailing within their respective national societies... [and] suffer from economic subjugation." These peoples are politically weak, economically marginal and culturally stigmatized members of the national societies that have overtaken them and their lands. Together with the Indians and Inuits of North America, the Indian peoples of central and south America, the Lapps (Saami) of Scandinavia, the Ainu of Japan, Maori of New Zealand, the Dalits and Adivasis of India the first nations peoples of Canada and other Indigenous peoples in different parts of the world, the Aborigines of Australia have come to be known as the "Fourth world". Struggling variously to retain traditional lands, to cope with government
administration of their affairs and to survive as culturally distinct peoples within nation-states, they have found literature as an effective means of articulating their interests and drama as the most powerful of them all.

The Aborigines of Australia are the indigenous people of Australia. They have the longest continuous cultural history in the world, with origins dating back to the last Ice Age and are said to be from South East Asia. Their oral literature and archeological evidences point to a culture that has survived for 40,000 years. Apart from traditional myths and legends concerning their origin and way of life, their songs and stories also include records of their frequent contact with people from Malaya and Indonesia and their later encounter with the Europeans. With European invasion the Aboriginal voices were silenced, marginalised and ignored. Later they were collected as quaint relics of a dying race and relegated to folklore studies and other specialised ethnographies, or were re-presented in non-white writings. Meanwhile Aboriginal culture and literature had adapted to the changes. Aboriginal Oral Literature depicted their reactions against white invaders and it draws attention to a universal awareness of illegal dispossession. Aboriginal ceremonies provided an outlet in which the Aborigines tried to look on the humorous side, mimicking the oppressor and proving that they were essentially, undefeated in spirit (Berndt 386).
Aboriginal writing in English, which is a comparatively recent phenomenon in Aboriginal literature has challenged the dominant "official" view of Australia's past and has introduced a new perspective based on The Dreaming. It attempts to "deconstruct the construction of Aboriginality" (qtd. in Hemming 26), to present "the diverse and dynamic images of contemporary Aboriginality and to point out that "the violence of the early contact period have continued to the present day" (27). As the first National Aboriginal Writers' Conference maintain, Aboriginal writing has "never been divorced from the aboriginal struggle for economic freedom, legal recognition and reforms of basic living conditions" (Paperbark 2).

Jack Davis (1917-2000) is one of the first published of Aboriginal playwrights, and he celebrates the Aboriginal voices of Australia. He began his literary career as a poet but is better known for his plays. As Mudrooroo Narogin points out, drama did not exist prior to the arrival of whites in Australia; the oral tradition that had provided the basis for Aboriginal histories had always consisted of song, music, dance and story-telling, elements which inevitably became central to the Aboriginal practice and experience of drama. The tradition had continued even after European settlement. Jack Davis observes that Aborigines "have always been acting. . . . We've acted up before magistrates, we've acted up before the police, we've acted up before social workers; we've always done our own mime" (qtd. in Tompkins 49). According to Davis drama is closer to
traditional Aboriginal oral narrative since it gives "a special look at the Aboriginal, a slice of Aboriginal existence or life" (Shoemaker 23).

Davis' plays incorporate elements that are essential features of Aboriginal heritage and culture and foreground the Aboriginal past. By fusing Aboriginal oral culture and western dramatic forms he deals with current Aboriginal concerns. Verbal and non-verbal trajectories of drama are deployed with great ingenuity in his plays and these include song, dance and the traditional modes of story telling. He uses the elements of oral culture to foreground a largely ignored Aboriginal past and to emphasize the presence and contributions of the Aborigines of Australia. He also shows the changes in the Nyoongah way of life by hybridising many experiences. The Aboriginal sense of place and displacement, tendency towards subversion, presentation of a distinctive Aboriginal view of time-space relationship, ethics, metaphysics and aesthetics together constitute an altogether new dramatic genre that certainly lie far outside the domain of Australian mainstream culture.

Ritual to Theatre and Back

Gilbert and Tompkins lists five aspects that comprises ritual:

- Presentational acts that often incorporate the representational, and sometimes manifestational acts which transcend both;

- Acts that are believed to be real, not fictional or play, even if aspects of play are incorporated into the ritual;
• Acts that are performed by ‘knowledgeable human agents’ for a specific audience which knows how to act or participate in response;

• Acts that are performed for the continuance and regeneration of a specific community often at a particular time, usually through a spiritual dimension; and

• Acts that are based in history and work to preserve history but which are not necessarily impervious to change. (58).

In Aboriginal Australia rituals included presentational actions like showing, telling, dancing and singing to the accompaniment of clapsticks, didgeridoo, etc. It also included representational actions like imitation, impersonation and other forms of mimesis, and sometimes, a transcendence or manifestation in which the performer becomes the ancestral spirit. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, today, Aboriginal ritual has been shaped by a multitude of manipulators including the forces of colonisation and hence cannot be recaptured in its ‘original’ pre-colonial form. But the combining of rituals with other cultural forms, provide new performative events and practices, which acknowledge the changes wrought by colonialism (58). When a ritual is presented on stage or is reinterpreted in the dramatic context, it becomes theatre/entertainment and its meaning is altered when placed consciously within a play.

According to Schechner, the move from ritual to theatre happens
when a participating audience fragments into a collection of people who pay, who come because the show is advertised, who evaluate what they are going to see before they see it; and the move from theatre to ritual happens when the audience as a collection of separate people is dissolved into the performance as participants. In his opinion, these opposing tendencies are present in all performances (155).

Brecht, and Meyerhold before him, worked to keep the tension between these extremes working throughout each performance by moving an audience back and forth moment to moment. The deep effect of Brecht's *verfremdung* is to unexpectedly shift modes, styles, rhythms, perspectives; and at the moment of change, when the affective part of a scene abruptly stops, or when a distanced beat suddenly becomes moving--the dramaturgic structure allows the writer/director/performer to make a 'statement', insert a comment, to encourage the spectator, to think about what he's seen and/or felt. The structure of the performance is obliterated by its anti-structure and in the liminal moment a direct communication, a deep contact, with the audience is made. (Schechner 155)
This exactly what happens in Davis's plays especially *Kullark*. While it contains the five aspects listed by Gilbert and Tompkins as comprising a ritual, it is at the same time theatre.

Comparing ritual and its importance in a community with drama and its function in society, M.J.O. Echeruo observes in the Igbo context that "drama is to the society what ritual is to religion: a public affirmation of an idea; a translation into action of a mythos or plot just as ritual is the translation of a faith into external action" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 56). The plays of Jack Davis illustrate this.

What Kacke Gotrick says of the Apidan theatre of the Yoruba people is true for Aboriginal drama and especially the plays of Jack Davis that they "are at the same time presentational and representational, . . . are efficacious, and . . . are conceived of as a duality by the appropriate spectators, comprising reality and fiction simultaneously" (qtd. in Gilbert and Tompkins 57).

Jack Davis has been "a pioneer in the resurgence and continuance of Nyoongah culture" (Mudrooroo 128), "and his work attempt to "enrich Australia's culture and conscience by centering the Aboriginal experience since the invasion" (Foreword *Barungin*). He has published seven plays (*Kullark/The Dreamers* (1982), *No Sugar* (1986), *Barungin (Smell the Wind)* (1989), *Honey Spot* (1987), *In Our Town* (1992), and *Moorli and the Leprechaun* (1994). Through his plays Jack Davis speaks for the Aboriginal population of Australia. According to Gerry Turcotte, part of
Davis' purpose in writing is both to celebrate the Aboriginal voices of Australia and to raise them loudly in areas which, for so long seemed deaf to their words. Moreover, “his success as a playwright throughout the world, and his reception by both indigenous and non-indigenous peoples from Canada to Australia, suggest that Davis has succeeded in tapping into a vein that threads across generations, language barriers and [. . .] racial lines” (Turcotte 2).

Davis’s plays are an expression of “Aboriginality” which is “the legacy of traditional Black Australian culture” (Shoemaker, *Black Words* 232). However, the concept of Aboriginality predicates political engagement. As Davis himself says to Shoemaker, “if you’re Aboriginal then you’re a politician. If you’re black, you’re political” (32). The concept of the Dreaming is the central symbolism in Davis’s plays and he uses a mixture of social realism and the anti-naturalistic style to represent the Dreamtime. As Justine Saunders points out, he never really resolves the two, “just as you can’t go back to a traditional way of life, nor [. . .] live a totally European way, with its alien spirituality” (*Plays from Black Australia* vii).

By a postcolonial rewriting of the past he expresses the validity of Aboriginal history and forces a reassessment of Aboriginal history and drama. White Australian history celebrates “the achievement of nationhood and the quest for an Australian identity” (Dibble 93). Following Said’s *Orientalism*, the “class of strategies that colonial powers
... adopted to construct the colonised Other" has been defined by Bob Hodge and Vijay Mishra as “Aboriginalism” (xxxi). In this discourse, the Aborigine is seen as physically, psychologically and socially inferior and at the same time, through their identification with tribe, land, and nature, as metaphysically or spiritually superior” (Dibble 93). It excludes “as ‘inauthentic’ those blacks who are distant in space, time, biology and practices from their tribal origins” (93) thereby depriving them of historical agency and claim to land. Moreover, by writing the Aborigine out of history white Australins “bestow on themselves an antiquity and historical past which their recent arrival and colonial status precludes” (94). As Dibble and MacIntyre point out the Aborigines resist this erasure from white history by exploiting the double inscription of colonial discourse, by inserting a different set of attitudes, values, definitions and knowledges, through subversion, and through the language of the colonizer (94). By bringing two belief systems into play he produces two different, even contradictory, meanings. Through a reassessment of history he reveals the political process inherent in the selection, organization and presentation of events in history (106) and by foregrounding the Aboriginal historical perspective he disperses the authority inherent in official accounts.

*Kullark* tells the story of *Nyoongah's* reactions to the arrival of the first whites, who establishes the Swan River Colony in 1827. It also tells the story of the Yorlakah family living in Western Australia in 1933 and
later in 1979. Yagan's rebellion against the European invasion of 1839 is shown to continue in the lives of the Yorlah family. *No Sugar* explains forced moves from places where families had lived for generations and explores life at the mission on which Aborigines were forced to live. *In Our Town* looks at this same family ten years later and depicts the post-world war II experience of retuning Aboriginal Servicemen. *The Dreamers* chronicles the history of the contemporary urban Wallitch family. The increasingly degraded and oppressed Nyoongah family that appears periodically on the stage is linked to Worru and the contemporary family making a symbolic statement of the displacement of Aborigines and their present plight as a result of imperialism. *Barungin* dealing with Aboriginal deaths in custody shows a corelation between Black deaths, everyday lived experiences of Nyoongahs and their historical treatment. Through Davis' presentation of "Aboriginal history, the period of European neo-history" (qtd. in Elder 204) and "Aboriginal post-history" (Elder 204) one can also trace the evolution of black-white relations in Australia.

The presence of traditional performance elements like storytelling, song, dance and music, affect the content, structure and style of Davis' plays and consequently its overall meaning/effect. As key sites of resistance to imposed values and practices, not only do they act as "mnemonic devices that assist in the preservation of history" but also as "effective strategy for maintaining cultural difference. Since the
incorporation of these elements into western dramatic forms, involves a departure from the techniques and assumptions of realism and stretches colonial definitions of theatre, it asserts the validity (and the vitality) of the Aboriginal mode of representation (Gilbert and Tompkins 54).

Davis's belief that without a language there is no culture encouraged him to assist in the restoration of the Nyoongah language, a composite of the remnants of the fourteen Bubblimun dialects spoken by the original tribes of the area. The dialogues in Davis' plays which are in Aboriginal English, or Neo-Nyoongah as Berndt calls it, *(Kullark/The Dreamers)* have a liberal sprinkling of the Nyoongah language of the South West of Western Australia along with its accompanying paralinguistic features. According to Gilbert and Tompkins, the introduction of the Nyoongah language "helps to reinvest [Indigenous] peoples and their characteristic systems of communication with a sense of power and an active place on the stage (168). Moreover these words left untranslated maintain the integrity of "Otherness" and foreground the continual reality of cultural distance. It is a political act, a means of resistance or separatist celebration.

His characters lament the loss of language. At the same time words like 'wetjala' (whitefella) illustrate their ability to appropriate the language of the imperial centre and use it for their own expressive purposes.

Davis celebrates the vibrancy, persistence and resistance of
Aboriginal heritages and their survival even though in hybridised forms (Tompkins 48). His plays foreground the fact that despite bad health, disillusionment, excessive drinking, poverty, deaths in custody, and white hatred, the Nyoongah spirit has survived. While celebrating the aspects of Aboriginal life no attempt is made to gloss over the problems of Aboriginal society. As Saunders points out “there is drunkenness and aggression, but there is also humour, wonderful humour born of the breadline, and a sense of the real worth of everyone no matter how down and out. By appropriating the English language, its discursive forms and modes of representation, to bear the burden of the Aboriginal experience, Davis's plays present a form of postcolonial resistance to cultural hegemony. They are a “Celebration of Aboriginality through Theatre of Hybridisation”. By combining aspects of Aboriginal oral culture with the conventions of Western theatre he redefines concepts of drama and establishes it as the most ancient of art forms.

Possible areas of research

The indigenous literatures of Australia, Canada and New Zealand have striking similarities of “concern, timing, theme and execution” (Shoemaker 247) and Indigenous ideologies find expression through an enormous range of cultural productions -- the visual, performing and literary arts being vital to the identity of native minority groups. The Indigenous writers in all these three countries reflect their trials of invasion in their works and present indigenous histories as lived
experiences; life story being the most popular genre. Founded on a powerful oral tradition, they speak of the resilience of the tribal group through a unique combination of wit and humour, magic realism and the supernatural thus defying non-aboriginal expectations.

In the 1970's and 1980's Harry Dansey (Te Raukura: The Feathers of the Albatross (1972)), John Broughton (Te Hara (The Sin) (1988), Te Hokinga Mai and Marae) Renee (Asking for It) Rena Owen (Te Awa i Tahuti (1987)) Riwia Brown (Roimata) Rore Hapiti (Death of the Land ) and Hone Tuwhare (In the Wilderness without a Hat ) and Hone Kouka Mauri Tu (1991)) of New Zealand; Tomson Highway (The Rez Sisters (1986), Drew Hayden Taylor (The Bootlegger Blues (1990), Someday (1991), of Canada; Jack Davis, Robert Merritt (The Cake Man (1978)) , Bob Maza (The Keepers (1988)) , Richard Walley (Coordah (1987), Jimmy Chi (Bran Nue Dae (1987) ) of Australia have all used drama to great effect to spread their message and educate the audience. All these writers see continuities with the past in their work and consider themselves as contemporary storytellers. They invest heavily in spirituality, which also colour their attitude towards writing.

There are striking parallels between the African-American and Aboriginal Australian experiences and literatures, which might be profitably explored. Emmanual Nelson points out how, while Kevin Gilbert mentions Malcolm X and Frederick Douglass; Colin Johnson talks about Bobby Seale, Eldridge Cleaver and Malcolm X; Jack Davis
refers to Martin Luther King and Malcolm X and Kath walker cites Amiri Baraka, in addition to Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison and James Baldwin (Westerly). Moreover, the theatre of Ed Bullins is “dedicated to the continuing survival of Black People” (qtd. in Elder 101), minutely depicts the various facets of black existence. Arlene Elder describes his plays as contemporary rituals, by recognizing his “conscious desire to reawaken the power of this ancient form in his audience” (102). His plays, like The Corner, In the Wine Time and In New England Winter, reveal his ability to couch revolutionary interpretations of the black American experience in ritual form, drawing on the traditions of black oratory, narrative, street talk, mythology, and music.

Like the Aborigines of Australia who are said to be from South-East Asia, Dalits who form seventy percent of India’s population are indigenous people of India, whose history have been traced to the people of the Indus valley civilization, 3rd millennium before Christ, and is linked to a large number of indigenous groups, particularly known as the ‘adivasis’. These peoples have found literature as an effective means of articulating their interests and drama, the most powerful of them all.

Enough scope for cross-cultural Comparative Studies are viable between The Dreamers by Jack Davis, The Shadow of the Tiger by Chandrasekhar Kambar and Nadugadhika by K.J. Baby. Chandrasekhar Kambar, one of the towering personalities in Kannada literature, is a Dalit poet, novelist, folklorist and dramatist. His plays Jokumaraswamy

The play *Nadugadhika*, written in the Malayalam language by K J. Baby, and translated into English by Shirley Joseph, his wife is structured around the tribal ritual Nadugadhika, conducted among the Paniyas and Adiyas, the tribals of the hills of Wayanad, on the borders of Kerala, Karnataka and Tamilnadu -- and is believed to exorcise all the disease causing spirits in the land. The play transforms the religious rite into a historical one and deals with two hundred years of tribal history in Wayanad. While exploring contemporary issues the play interrogates the causes for the present plight of the tribals. By incorporating music, song, dance and narration, and by blending legends and ritual beliefs he tries to arouse memories of a forgotten past in order to effect a symbolic re-enactment of their resurrection.
WORKS CITED


