

Crisis of Identity in George Ryga's "Indian"

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Abstract

Currently, Canadian literature occupies a prominent position on the world literary map, but its thousand-year history is strongly based in indigenous literature, as the aboriginals was the first one to settle in Canada. Then, as time went on, Canadian writing increasingly drifted away from it. The literature of its colonies, such as French and British, as well as Canadian literature, began to cast a shadow. To record their culture and identity loss as a result of colonialism Indigenous writing also began to openly proclaim the colonial masters' methodical and calculated tactics to change the natives' culture and identity. The prevalence of a diverse range of national and ethnic cultures and subcultures complicates the representation of Canadian literature. As a result, intercultural disputes among people and its ramifications are a prevalent theme in Canadian literature. As a result, Aboriginal playwrights were able to maintain their traditional beliefs, cultural practises, and languages by creating and presenting dramas. It aided them in reclaiming their Aboriginal identity and instilling pride in their heritage. In this way how George Ryga's "Indian" through the character Indian depicts the longing and need for an identity is presented.

Key Words: Identity, oppressed, alienated suffering, jobless,

"Indian" is a one-act drama by George Ryga that clearly addresses problems such as aboriginal crisis of identity and isolation in their own territory. The drama is recognised for portraying the situation of Canada's First Nations people in a realistic manner. The story's plot focuses on Ryga's personal experience recovering from influenza by working on his father's Alberta farm with Cree Indians. Because the play's tale was inspired by the author's actual experiences, it has a more realist and true tone in the manner George Ryga depicted the native people's tough living conditions. In his plays, he has effectively depicted the inhabitants' poor living conditions. In this drama, he focuses on how the local people suffered both

mentally and physically as a result of the white masters' discrimination, marginalisation, and alienation in the reserves.

The drama also explores the deprivation and misery of the "Indian," who is alternately named but finally remains anonymous. Ryga demonstrates in this drama that the Indians' predicament as a result of social isolation is much worse than death itself. George Ryga makes society understand the searing of injustice done to the aboriginal on Canada's reserves through the realistic dramatisation of their suffering in this play.

In 1961, television broadcasted the play Indian. Three significant characters appear in the drama. To begin, Indian is a prominent character whose given name is not stated by the author in order to emphasise the issue of identity struggle and create the character more global. He works for his boss Watson as a temporary labourer. Indians are short-haired and have very delicate skin. He's also been seen wearing skintight jeans and worn-in cowboy boots. He also sports a broad-brimmed black western hat. Watson, a farmer and the Indian's boss, is the next character. Agent, a civil servant, is another well-known character in the play. He's a field worker for the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

In order to make the character Agent more ubiquitous, George Ryga purposefully gave it no name. Agent is a white settler who has abused and marginalized Canada's First Nations people. Indian is resting with a tiny lump of the soil behind his neck as a pillow while the screen is raised. He's wearing a hat over his face and facing the sun. Watson, Indian's boss, has assigned the task of erecting fence poles. He screams violently at Indian when he discovers that he is still sleeping in the morning without performing his task. As he lies down, Indian informs Watson that he is suffering from a headache and requests that Watson refrain from shouting.

Watson spots Indian's footwear and, suspecting him of stealing it, inquires about it. Indian tells him he won it last night in Poker. Gambling is a type of poker. Watson then inquires about Indian's companions, who are working for Watson and residing in a neighbouring tent. The tent had been burned, says the Indian, pointing to a heap of ashes. Watson inquires about the resting in the camp kid Alphonse. When Sam and Roy started fighting, Indian claims that Alphonse fled away. Watson then explains that Alphonse informed him he was offered certain strange combined cocktails to put him to sleep. While acknowledging that they

gave Alphonse some alcohol, the Indian insists that the alcohol is beneficial to his health. Then Indian becomes curious about Alphonse's whereabouts. Watson informs him that he may have imprisoned him in the granary for Alphonse's safety and protection.

Indian is taken aback by this news and assures Watson that Alphonse will not cause any harm. Then Watson inquires about Indian's friends who were resting in the tent with him. The Indian also repeats his previous response, claiming that they fled when the camp burst into flames. Watson becomes upset when he hears this, and he begins to blame Indian for receiving ten bucks the day before after claiming that he was starving but had not completed the work. Indian is gazing idly at the distant fences, reminding Watson that ten dollars' amount of work has already been completed out of forty dollars.

Watson rejects it and tells Indian that he has twenty-nine posts earning \$2.19. Indian is gazing at the work he has to complete, urgently and exhaustedly. Through the figure of Indian in this play, it is clear that George Ryga wishes to portray the helplessness of the locals in the reserve. He has also demonstrated the Indian people's poverty. Watson then begins to frighten Indian, telling him that if he tries to flee like his buddies without finishing the job, he will shoot the kid Alphonse. Indian is taken aback by this news and agrees to stay to finish his task. Watson yells at him that it's already half past nine o'clock, but he hasn't even considered going to work. Indian explains that he is suffering from a severe headache and stomach trouble. Watson yells at him once more to stop making excuses and get to work right away.

The white overlords in Canada, according to George Ryga, were will fully deaf to the local people's difficulties. They were unconcerned about the native community's conflicts. As a result, they never attempted to resolve the difficulties and instead took advantage of the native people's troubles to gain control. Instead of treating the local people's injured hearts, they injure them by massaging them with their salty hands. With anxiety, Indian begins his fencing task. He has no choice, despite his illness, for Alphonse's life is on the line. The tensions shown in this drama are a reflection of the local people's terrible lives. They had little choice but to suffer with shattered hearts most of the time. Then, when Indian mentions the whiskey he used to drink, Watson mocks him for drinking low-quality

whiskey before reminding him that he wants to see ten bucks worth of work completed.

Watson is asked if he will feed Indian that once job is over. Watson informs him that it doesn't matter if Indian dies or lies in the ground after the job is finished. He also requests Indian to leave his land and go to the side of the road. The following exchange between Indian and Watson elucidates the white employer's nasty attitude. George Ryga has revealed how White employers abused original inhabitants on Canadian reservations through the persona of Watson. Watson is described by Indians as a tough man who doesn't even comprehend his circumstances. He also tells Watson about catching a cat and eating it when he was hungry during the winter. Watson isn't interested in hearing from Indian and instead requests that he finish the fence.

For the time being, Indian keeps working on his fence. Then he abruptly begins to speak for himself. He claims that there is a lot of fearful chatter going on in the world. If Indians want to survive, he claims, they must fear people. He also claims that Watson has offered him a job as a result of his frightening him. Agent visits at the location where Indian is attempting to keep an eye on the situation and hear any concerns he may have. When Agent inquires about the situation, Indian cynically responds that everything is running smoothly. Agent informs Indian that the camp tent was set ablaze the night before. When he questions Indian if he has any complaints, he replies he does, but he urges him not to bother him because he needs to do his task in order to save Alphonse as well as some income.

Watson would assassinate Alphonse if he flees like his friends did. Then he jokingly tells Agent that if he wants to file a complaint, he could mention that he is suffering from a headache. The sight of an enraged Indian makes the agent nervous. By offering him a smoke, he hopes to soothe him. Agent then inquires about Indian's footwear and cap, which he believes Indian may have taken from somewhere. Indian said that he had won them by gaming. When Agent questions Indian about his shirt, he tells him that he took it from his sick and dying brother because he can't catch him. The agent then asks Indian for his identity so that he can alert his officers, but Indian refuses. Indian claims that he has forgotten his name or that he doesn't have one at all. The Agent becomes annoyed as the Indian continues to call him by different names.

Indians are clearly alienated in their own land by European overlords in this scene. George Ryga further asserts that the White Masters have taken everything from the indigenous people, including their property, territory, culture, language, and even their names. As a result, Ryga has drawn international attention to a number of issues confronting indigenous peoples, particularly the loss of identity. He has effectively presented the dreadful life situation of aboriginal in Canada through the characterization of Indian.

Indians' voices are not unique and are not exclusive to Canada. It is also the message of all those who are excluded, oppressed, or disregarded in the cosmos and yearns for a sense of belonging. It personifies and universalizes George Ryga's works. Through his play, he hoped to get people to listen to the native people's voices, and he succeeded.

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