

# LINES AND CIRCLES

## *The “Rez” Plays of Tomson Highway*

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WITHOUT QUESTION, the most important new Canadian playwright to emerge in the latter half of the 1980s has been Tomson Highway. In less than three years, and with only two major plays, Highway has joined a select group of playwrights whose new plays, sight unseen, are treated as significant cultural events by Canadian critics, scholars, and audiences. The two plays, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, both won the coveted Dora Mavor Moore award for the best new play produced in Toronto, the former for the 1986-87 season and the latter for 1988-89. Tomson Highway says his ambition in life, and therefore presumably in his plays, is “to make ‘the rez’ [reserve] cool, to show and celebrate what funky folk Canada’s Indian people really are.”<sup>1</sup> In this, *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing* have been wildly successful, attracting enthusiastic audiences, both white and Native, far beyond the real-life reserve where *The Rez Sisters* was conceived and first performed.

To non-Native critics, myself included, Tomson Highway is an exotic new figure in Canadian theatre. Born on his father’s trap-line in northern Manitoba, he spoke only Cree until going to a Catholic boarding school at age six. In high school in Winnipeg he became a musical prodigy, eventually earning university degrees in English and music while studying to be a concert pianist. After graduation, however, Highway abruptly jettisoned his musical career and spent the ensuing seven years working with various Native support organizations. Then, he says, he wished to begin integrating all these experiences:

So I started writing plays, where I put together my knowledge of Indian reality in this country with classical structure, artistic language. It amounted to applying sonata form to the spiritual and mental situation of a street drunk, say, at the corner of Queen and Bathurst.<sup>2</sup>

Highway is perhaps the first Canadian member of the international tradition of accomplished writers who work in their second language. Among playwrights, this tradition includes Samuel Beckett in French and Tom Stoppard in English. Like them, Highway delights in linguistic estrangements and paradoxes. Furthermore, the fact that Highway's first language is Cree contributes to his unusual dramatic style. As Highway points out, Cree differs from English in three obvious ways. First, he says, "[it] is hilarious. When you talk Cree, you laugh constantly."<sup>3</sup> Second, it is visceral, in the sense that bodily functions are discussed openly and casually. Finally, words in Cree have no gender. The impact of these three qualities on Highway's plays goes beyond language to their mythopoeic core; for inevitably, the qualities of Native language reflect Native cultural values, values which stand diametrically opposite some Christian European ones: in this case risible, sensual, genderless articulation as opposed to sombre, abstract, patriarchal discourse. This must be why, although we can understand what Highway's characters say, we can scarcely believe what we're hearing.

The character of Nanabush is vital in presenting these un-European values in both *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. "The Trickster," known by different names in different languages, is a central figure in Native mythology. Indeed, says Highway, the Trickster is as important to Cree culture as Christ is to Western culture.<sup>4</sup> Embodying qualities of Native language and values, Nanabush is funny, visceral, and may be of either gender. Because Nanabush is also mischievous and fallible, unlike Christ in the European tradition, the Native listener must exercise his own judgment to learn from Nanabush's adventures, whereas Christ's followers need only obey precept and example. To further demonstrate the divergence of the Native and Christian traditions, Highway draws a circle on a piece of paper and explains:

This is the way the Cree look at life. A continuous cycle. A self-rejuvenating force. By comparison, Christian theology is a straight line. Birth, suffering, and then the apocalypse. . . . Human existence isn't a struggle for redemption to the Trickster. It's fun, a joyous celebration.<sup>5</sup>

In the Euro-Christian dramatic tradition, a cyclical structure tends to connote stagnation and failure. For example, while Samuel Beckett's famous tramps survive to continue waiting for Godot, their existence seems pointless; by contrast, Hamlet dies at the end of his long linear story, yet passes forward some hope for a new beginning. What makes Highway's plays so striking is the tension created between the two cultural traditions: while he writes in Euro-Christian dramatic form, he accepts Native values as a hypothetical position. In *The Rez Sisters* and *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, linear elements generally show characters becoming lost by stubbornly following a straight line, while circular elements signal regeneration.

**S**TRUCTURALLY, the two plays are very similar. Both are set on the fictional Indian reserve of Wasaychigan Hill, on Manitoulin Island in Ontario. Both take place in the present. Both mention characters which appear in the other play. *The Rez Sisters* involves seven characters, all women, plus the trickster Nanabush who is played by a man; *Dry Lips* involves seven characters, all men, plus the trickster Nanabush who is played by a woman. What structural differences exist between the two plays are more of degree than of kind: *Dry Lips*, for example, is more episodic and more free in the use of non-realistic elements. The difference in tone between the two plays, however, is as extreme as it can be.

*The Rez Sisters* begins at the house of 53-year-old Pelajia Patchnose, who is reshingling her roof with the amiable but inept assistance of her sister Philomena Moosetail. Pelajia is fed up with life in "plain, dusty, boring old Wasaychigan Hill." The only excitement in the lives of these women comes from the small-stakes bingo games in the local church and nearby towns; but even that pleasure has become stale, flat, and unprofitable to the melancholy Pelajia. However, the indolent August haze over these women begins to lift in the second scene, in the yard of their half-sister Marie-Adele Starblanket, when a rumour begins to circulate about THE BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD coming to Toronto. (This phrase is capitalized every time it occurs.) Like a "Wasy" version of Chicken Little, Marie-Adele's excitable sister Annie Cook leads the pursuit and confirmation of this rumour, collecting on the way another sister, Emily Dictionary; a sister-in-law, Veronique St. Pierre; and Veronique's mentally disabled adopted daughter, Zha-boonigan Peterson. After a slapstick argument among the group in the Wasy general store, all seven women march to the Band Office to demand funding for their trip to the bingo in Toronto. The first act ends with the (unseen) chief rejecting this oddball delegation.

The second act opens with the women taking affirmative action on the matter. Collectively they have a wide range of skills, all of which they employ to raise the necessary \$1,400 for the trip: cleaning, harvesting, baking, recycling, entertaining, home maintenance, and entrepreneurial acumen are all put to use in a raucously funny "fundraising" collage. In an accomplished display of dramatic pacing, Highway follows this frantic scene with a series of quiet, introspective encounters among the women as they drive their borrowed van through the night to Toronto. He then raises the play to a climax of tempo and energy with the bingo event itself. In the grand-prize game for \$500,000, THE BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD disintegrates into more slapstick, with the Wasy women finally storming the podium and making off with the bingo machine. At the same time, the meaning of the game is raised to another level: Marie-Adele, sick with abdominal cancer, literally waltzes from this world to the next in the arms of the resplendent Bingo Master,

moving peacefully into a spiritual realm while worldly chaos rages around her. Following this climax, back at Wasaychigan Hill, we see the remaining “rez sisters” bury Marie-Adele, and we observe how the events of the play have changed their lives.

WHILE THE PLOT IS SIMPLE AND LINEAR, the play is not. Its complexity lies not in the plot, but in a sophisticated pattern of character revelation and development which entwines the plot. A reading of some of the women’s individual stories — a character’s “through-line” in theatrical terminology — will help to demonstrate how the strength of the play depends on cyclical character journeys rather than on the plot line.

Philomena’s story, for example, is a victory of simple needs and simple dreams. During the course of the play, she moves from contentment in the present, to despondency rooted in past sorrows, to return with greater contentment to concerns of the present. In the opening scene, while Pelajia wrestles with her existential angst, Philomena dreams only of winning “every [bingo] jackpot between here and Espanola,” so that she might build for herself a new ultra-modern bathroom. This dream is evidently inspired by a bowel problem: her “sisters” tease her about her frequency of visits to the toilet, and in the hubbub of the general store scene she adds her comments imperiously from a sitting position in the john.

Later in the play, however, we learn that Philomena’s bluff good cheer is to some extent an act of will. In the long drive in the van, she reveals that the date of THE BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD holds special significance: it is the birthday of her lost child. Almost thirty years earlier, while working as a secretary in Toronto’s garment district, she had an affair with a married white man. After he broke it off, Philomena gave up her newborn baby for adoption without even learning if it was a boy or a girl. This revelation is a low point for Philomena, normally a cheerful caring busybody to her “rez sisters.” But she is not the sort to stay low for very long. As it happens, she is the only one of the group to win any money at the bingo in Toronto, and on her return she uses her modest winnings to realize her worldly dream: a grand new bathroom with, as centrepiece, a large toilet, “spirit white . . . [and] so comfortable you could just sit on it right up until the day you die!” Her other dream, that of finding her lost child, is forgotten. A key ingredient of Philomena’s contentment, apparently, is to choose attainable dreams.

The dreams of her sister Pelajia are much more difficult to fulfil. She is the natural leader of the group, a stern father-figure in coveralls brandishing her ever-present hammer. A sense of her own powerlessness and aimlessness in the community have brought on her current malaise, to the point where she wants to abandon this society and move to Toronto. For Pelajia, the huge prizes in THE

BIGGEST BINGO IN THE WORLD re-animate her dream of paving the roads on the reserve, which would empower her leadership by demonstrating the wisdom of her proposals.

Pelajia's story is that of learning how to lead, of developing her latent talent into a positive force. She is at her weakest when she uses her hammer to threaten people, even if it is for their own good. She gains stature when she uses it constructively (shingling roofs in the fund-raising scene) or shares it with others (allowing Emily to use it as a gavel in the trip-planning scene). When she dispenses with her hammer entirely, calming a terrified Marie-Adele in the darkened van, Pelajia demonstrates that she is truly a constructive leader. Later, speaking at Marie-Adele's funeral, Pelajia shares some acquired wisdom with her sisters to help mitigate their grief: Marie-Adele made the most of her life while she was here, and now Pelajia promises to do the same. By the end of the play, Pelajia has accepted her own talent for leadership, and determines to use it to genuinely improve conditions on the reserve rather than just to complain about them. She is back on her roof where she began the play, but her hammer has become a badge of purpose rather than just a physical tool.

The mainspring of the play is Marie-Adele, whose fear, suffering, and final ascension into the spirit world drive its events and character journeys. Marie-Adele does not love bingo for its own sake, as Annie and Philomena do, but for the dream which the grand prize might buy: an idyllic island home in Georgian Bay for her husband Eugene and their fourteen children. This dream is doomed, alas, pushed aside by Marie-Adele's growing concerns for her family in the event of her death. As if this worry weren't hard enough, her illness is also driving a wedge between her and her beloved Eugene, as she confides to Pelajia on their way to Toronto:

He doesn't talk, when something goes wrong with him, he doesn't talk, shuts me out, just disappears. Last night he didn't come home. Again, it happened. . . . I can't even have him inside me anymore. It's still growing there. The cancer. Pelajia, een-pay-see-see-yan. [Pelajia, I'm scared to death.]

The figure of Nanabush haunts Marie-Adele throughout the play. In fact, the terminally ill Marie-Adele and the feeble-minded Zhaboonigan are the only characters aware of Nanabush in his various guises. He first appears in Marie-Adele's yard as a white seagull, playfully threatening to foul her laundry and disconcerting her with his stares. Then, on the road to Toronto, Nanabush appears to her as a black nighthawk, driving her into hysterics with her fears for herself and her family. Marie-Adele is due to take further tests in Toronto, two days after the gigantic bingo there, but she doesn't live that long. As she waltzes with Nanabush in the guise of the Bingo Master, he begins to transform into the nighthawk, in effect an Ojibway angel of death. After having resisted for so long, in this scene Marie-Adele comes to accept her own death in the same way that she accepted life, gently and

with love: "Oh. It's you, so that's who you are. . . . Come . . . don't be afraid. . . . Come to me . . . ever soft wings."

The death of Marie-Adele creates regenerative ripples through most of the cast of characters. Up to this point, for example, Veronique St. Pierre has shown herself to be a small-minded gossip frustrated by her own childlessness. After Marie-Adele dies, Veronique breathes life into her own dream by moving into the Starblanket home to take care of Marie-Adele's family. The hard-working widower Eugene can provide all the things that Veronique's alcoholic husband cannot: a huge roast to cook, a good stove to cook it in, and a ready-made family that needs her love and care. The cycle is completed; and Veronique's small-mindedness, we finally understand, was a symptom not of having too little love to bestow, but rather of having too few people on whom to bestow it. Similarly, Emily Dictionary seems an unappealing character when we first meet her: a coarse, tough, foul-mouthed young woman recently come home to "the rez" from California. On the trip to Toronto, however, we learn that Emily's present hard-bitten persona may be just one stage in a long process of healing. Her former husband beat her viciously for ten years, and her lesbian lover in California committed suicide. The latent love in Emily is brought out by Marie-Adele's fear and by Zhaboonigan's fragility. So is it, oddly, by Emily's current affair with Big Joey, Wasaychigan Hill's most notorious stud, for at the end of the play we learn that Emily is pregnant. A new life completes the cycle, to compensate somehow for the loss of Marie-Adele, as Emily is beautifully transformed into a loving sister to Zhaboonigan and a loving mother to her baby.

As playwright Carol Bolt puts it, watching *The Rez Sisters* makes the audience feel part of "an extraordinary, exuberant, life-affirming family."<sup>6</sup> It is not a play about social problems, but about people and their dreams and their fears. That these people happen to be Native women, reflecting some of the problems of their particular place in contemporary society, asserts one feature only of the play's appeal. As Tomson Highway has observed, "I'm sure some people went to *Rez* expecting crying and moaning and plenty of misery, reflecting everything they've heard about or witnessed on reserves. They must have been surprised. All that humour and love and optimism, plus the positive values taught by Indian mythology."<sup>7</sup> The oddity is that he should be so proud of avoiding negative responses in his first major play, when he provokes them so relentlessly in his second.

**I**N HIS EPIGRAPH TO *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*, Highway quotes a contemporary Native leader: "Before the healing can take place, the poison must be exposed." This goal is a lot less fun than the one he expresses for *The Rez Sisters*, that of celebrating Canada's "funky" Indian people. One must admit, however, that Highway achieves this goal no less successfully. *Dry Lips* is

intended as a “flip side” sequel to *The Rez Sisters*; in fact, a few of the men are familiar names from the earlier play, notably Veronique’s alcoholic husband Pierre St. Pierre and the sexual athlete Big Joey. It is a “flip side” in another way: in contrast to the life-affirming impulse of *The Rez Sisters*, we find in *Dry Lips* a litany of disturbing and violent events, set within a thin frame of hopefulness which is ultimately unconvincing.

As in *The Rez Sisters*, Highway gives each of the seven men in *Dry Lips* an easily identifiable preoccupation. Indeed, much of the humour of the play occurs when these preoccupations work at cross-purposes to each other. Zachary, the nearest thing to a lead character in the play, wishes to open a bakery on the reserve, and is about to present a budget proposal to the Band Council. But his project is jeopardized in the first scene when he is caught in sexually compromising circumstances by Big Joey, who is sponsoring a rival proposal for a local radio station to broadcast hockey games from the reserve’s arena. Big Joey threatens to show incriminating photos to Zachary’s wife, unless the bakery proposal is withdrawn in favour of the radio station.

The supporting characters of *Dry Lips* are not so interesting as those in *The Rez Sisters*, nor are their preoccupations. One is Creature Nataways, a garrulous simpleton who is Big Joey’s adoring sidekick. Late in the play we learn that his love for Big Joey probably has a homosexual basis, but by then the reason behind his devotion does not seem very important. Another is Spooky Lacroix, a reformed alcoholic who has become a fanatical Roman Catholic. Spooky spends much of the play knitting little garments for the baby his (offstage) wife is expecting at any moment. A third is Pierre St. Pierre, at fifty-three a decade or so older than the other men, a beer-swilling alcoholic and bootlegger. Pierre’s obsession is with the new women’s ice hockey team on the reserve, the “Wasy Wailerettes,” for which he’s been asked to referee. Like Annie Cook in *The Rez Sisters*, Pierre rushes from house to house spreading the news. Unlike bingo among the Wasy women, however, this report sparks no interest among the men, except some ironic musings that such an unnatural phenomenon as women playing hockey may portend apocalyptic changes lurking over the horizon.

Neither are the playwright’s premises for these characters so clever dramatically as in *The Rez Sisters*, because in general they do not compel the characters to take action. Thus, in *Dry Lips*, more of the action is imposed on the characters and less arises organically from their own needs. That much of the initiating action emanates from the two youngest characters in the play perhaps reflects the playwright’s concerns for the next generation of Native men. If so, the bleakness of his vision, as shown through the events which befall these two characters, is very discouraging.

One of the young men is 20-year-old Simon Starblanket, who appears to represent the hope of the next generation. We first meet him dancing and chanting in the forest under a full moon, dressed in a traditional costume made by his fiancée

Patsy. Patsy's stepmother, a medicine woman and midwife, is one of the few elders on the reserve concerned with preserving traditional Native values. "We've got to learn to dance again," says Simon. "I'm the one who has to bring the drum back. And it's Patsy's medicine power, that stuff she's learning from her step-mother . . . [that] helps me." As protégé, Simon seems just the man to lead a rebirth in Native values. And in his planned marriage with Patsy, who is pregnant with his child, Simon's potential to enrich the Wasy society seems fruitful indeed.

The other young man is 17-year-old Dickie Bird Halked, whom Simon has asked to be his best man. Dickie Bird's story, in contrast to Simon's, represents the hopelessness of the future for young Native people. Dickie Bird's mother gave birth to him, leaning against a lurid jukebox, in the Dickie Bird Tavern after which he was named. Her severe bouts of drinking resulted in the fetal alcohol syndrome which left Dickie Bird both mute and emotionally unstable. Rumours have reached him that his biological father was not his mother's husband, but rather Big Joey. In a series of flashbacks, the circumstances of his birth are re-enacted for the audience — perhaps taking place in Dickie Bird's own mind — and he begins to confuse Spooky's theological ramblings and Christ's agony on the cross with his mother's sordid labour, his own sense of abandonment, and Simon and Patsy's rejection of Christian dogma in favour of traditional Native spiritual values. In the play's horrifying climax, Patsy finds the disturbed boy wandering in his forest wilderness, and he brutally rapes her with a crucifix he's been carrying.

In contrast to the rather trivial searchings of the older men in the play — Zachary for his missing undershorts, Pierre for his missing ice skates — Simon and Dickie Bird are preoccupied with searches which have enormous human value attached to them: Simon for spiritual parameters, Dickie Bird for his natural father. The rape, however, ruptures the fragile bond between them, and destroys Simon's optimism as well. He gets a bottle and a gun, drinks himself into oblivion, and accidentally shoots himself just as Zachary is managing to talk him back to his proper senses. Furious, Zachary rages at the callousness of a God that could allow such a senseless tragedy to happen:

God! God of the Indian! God of the Whiteman! God-Al-fucking-mighty! Whatever the fuck your name is. Why are you doing this to us? Why are you doing this to us? Are you up there at all? Or are you some stupid, drunken shit, out-of-your-mind-passed out under some great beer table up there in your stupid fucking clouds? . . . I dare you to come down from your high-falutin' fuckin' shit-throne up there, come down and show us you got the guts to stop this stupid, stupid, stupid way of living. It's got to stop. It's got to stop. It's got to stop. It's got to stop. It's got to stop.

Before the healing takes place, says Highway, the poison must first be exposed. It is not a pleasant sight, but it is riveting.

During the rape scene, Big Joey is transformed from a harmless bully to a representative of weakness and evil in modern Native society. Before this scene, we

learned not only that Big Joey was Dickie Bird's father, but also that he fled from the jukebox birth seventeen years earlier. Now we see Big Joey witness the rape, take no action to stop it, and actively prevent Creature from interfering. Glimmers of explanation at first suggest some mystery and complexity to these unnatural acts: at Dickie Bird's birth, for instance, Big Joey "ran away and puked over on the other side of the bar, the sight of all that women's blood just scared the shit right out of him." That same year, Big Joey was one of a group of Natives beaten severely by FBI agents at a demonstration at Wounded Knee, South Dakota. "Ever since that spring," he says, "I've had these dreams where blood is spillin' out from my groin, nothin' there but blood and emptiness." But Big Joey's monstrous behaviour, we finally learn, is simply due to these two traumas being entangled in his mind. When Zachary demands an answer to the most perplexing question of the play — why did Big Joey allow his son to perpetrate this vicious rape? — Big Joey replies, "Because I hate them . . . I hate them fuckin' bitches. Because they — our own women — took the fuckin' power away from us faster than the FBI ever did." Perhaps most terrible crimes are committed for similarly prosaic reasons.

**H**IGHWAY'S FLUENCY WITH THEATRICAL IMAGERY makes his plays much stronger on the stage than on the page. This is also true of two other playwrights whom he credits as influences: James Reaney and Michel Tremblay. While *The Rez Sisters* and Tremblay's *Les Belles Soeurs* both revolve around women obsessed with bingo, however, there is no case to be made for derivativeness: the similarity is evidently due to common observable situations in real life rather than to any imitation. More intriguing is the influence of Reaney, in whose play-development workshops Highway participated while a student in London, Ontario, in the mid-1970s.<sup>8</sup> Highway himself acknowledges a debt to Reaney's use of poetic metaphor and mythological scale in the Donnelly trilogy.<sup>9</sup> But his stage imagery in these "rez" plays is all his own, particularly in his highly theatrical use of Nanabush. In *The Rez Sisters*, Nanabush is a mime and a dancer, always present but barely corporeal as the seagull, nighthawk, and Bingo Master. In *Dry Lips*, the "flip side," Nanabush is corporeality personified, appearing as grotesque versions of the women in these men's daily lives: Gazelle Nataways, the temptress who compromises Zachary's happy marriage; Black Lady Halked, Big Joey's alcoholic mistress and Dickie Bird's slattern mother; and Patsy, the hope of new life and new spiritual awareness for Simon, whose rape unbalances the fragile equilibrium of the men's interrelationships. Perhaps to emphasize the larger-than-life sexual importance that these women have for the Wasy men, Nanabush dons oversized prosthetic devices for their sexual characteristics: huge rubberized breasts for Gazelle, big buttocks for Patsy, and a full-term belly for Black Lady Halked, naked and reeling in the

Dickie Bird Tavern. The specifics of this theatrical imagery owe little to Tremblay and Reaney, but much to Highway's own explorations of his Native mythological heritage.

The tragedy of *Dry Lips* is of the men keeping on in their straight lines, absurdly reiterating their preoccupations instead of responding to the events around themselves. They participate in tragedy, but they do not seem to learn from it as the women of *The Rez Sisters* do. That we ultimately feel less involved with the men of *Dry Lips* may have to do with the "poison" that permeates their play. Are Native men more susceptible to the poison of their modern social context, of surviving in a Euro-Christian society, than Native women are? Highway avoids an answer, and weakens the credibility of his indictment in *Dry Lips*, with a palliative "dream" ending which seems gratuitous. Zachary awakens on his couch, naked, in exactly the same position as he was at the beginning of the play. There is no women's hockey team, no death, no consequences to the "stupid life" the men have been leading. Or are there? Was that way of life part of the bad dream as well? Or does there exist a mute Dickie Bird still looking for his father? We don't know. If it was all just a dream, we ought to resent being manipulated into caring about the victims of the play. But if the tragic conditions are real, then the upbeat tag ending, with Zachary joyfully lifting his infant daughter, undermines the issues which the play has raised.

Tomson Highway plans to write a cycle of "rez" plays, seven in all. Seven women in *The Rez Sisters*, seven men in *Dry Lips Oughta Move to Kapuskasing*. It is a mystical number in Cree mythology, as in European. Highway explains:

Legend has it that the shamans, who predicted the arrival of the white man and the near-destruction of the Indian people, also foretold the resurgence of the native people seven lifetimes after Columbus. We are that seventh generation.<sup>10</sup>

White society ought to watch carefully for this Native resurgence, because we need to learn from it. Our spiritual values have withered from neglect in our linear pursuit of progress. We are beginning to realize that we are poisoning ourselves physically as well, and we are not at all sure of our regenerative powers. We yearn for a society more in tune with that of Nanabush: more humorous, more visceral, less gender-bound. In this seventh lifetime, we must hope that Native values can regenerate themselves from their rape at the hands of white man's material objects. We will certainly listen to the next play from Tomson Highway. Not only will it be a cultural event, it may also be a play from which we can learn.

#### NOTES

<sup>1</sup> Introduction to *The Rez Sisters* (Saskatoon: Fifth House, 1988), xi.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted by Nancy Wigston, "Nanabush in the City," *Books in Canada*, 18.2 (March 1989), 8.

- <sup>3</sup> Quoted by Wigston, p. 8. Highway summarizes the qualities of the Cree language in this article.
- <sup>4</sup> Quoted by Nigel Hunt, "Tracking the Trickster," *Brick*, 37 (Autumn 1989), 59.
- <sup>5</sup> Quoted by Ted Ferguson, "Native Son," *Imperial Oil Review*, 73-395 (Winter 1989), 18, 20.
- <sup>6</sup> Carol Bolt, "No Wings, Yet," *Books in Canada*, 18.2 (March 1989), 26.
- <sup>7</sup> Quoted by Ferguson, p. 22.
- <sup>8</sup> Highway's name is mentioned several times in the diary of the "Wacousta Workshops" published in Reaney's *Wacousta!* (Toronto and Victoria: Press Porcépic, 1979). Another future playwright involved in these workshops was Allan Stratton.
- <sup>9</sup> See Wigston, p. 9, and Ferguson, p. 22.
- <sup>10</sup> Quoted by Wigston, p. 9.

