

**Culture, Conflict and Social Fabric – A Study of
Diane Glancy's Select Plays**

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CERTIFICATE

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This is to certify that I, C.Savitha, have carried out the research embodied in the present dissertation “Culture, Conflict and Social Fabric – A Study of Diane Glancy’s Select Plays” for the full period of time prescribed under the Ph.D ordinances of the University of Hyderabad.

I declare to the best of my knowledge that no part of this dissertation was earlier submitted for the award of a research degree of any university.

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Chapter 1

Locating Diane Glancy

The focus of the present study is on the exploration of various critical aspects in Diane Glancy's plays, which make it unique in terms of questions related to identity against a marginalised sociocultural context. These include the structural elements which contribute to her highly experimental body of work, the question of survival in the context of sociocultural collisions, and the empowered status of her women characters. In the process, we can discern the manner in which culture and conflicts operate in the creation of a dynamic social fabric which becomes crucial while negotiating issues related to survival in a marginalised context.

The present chapter will attempt to position Diane Glancy (1941-) within the context of the development of Native American theatre, American Women's theatre and the context of feminism. Diane Glancy is a prolific¹ Native American woman playwright of mixed heritage. While she inherited the Arkansian backhill culture mixed with Cherokee heritage from her father's side, the Anglo culture's "will, order and persistence" came from her German mother. However, in spite of her "marginalised" location, Glancy's voice appears to be empowered, especially in the context of her plays.

While classifying Glancy's work as contemporary Native American drama would be crucial to such a study, it also becomes necessary to critically position Glancy as a woman playwright, especially with reference to the feminist movement and its impact on theatre. This necessitates the references will be made to other women playwrights, whose significant efforts ensured the presence of a woman's voice on the American stage. Their

critical positioning may differ from that of Glancy but concerns remain similar. After a discussion on the critical terms of reference in each chapter, attempt will be made to study Glancy's position as a Native American woman playwright.

The original idea of Native American theatre, which was rooted in tradition and ritual, was modelled around the legends and the history of the community. Most of the theatrical performances were actually ceremonies, in which the audience was an integral part vital to the success of the performance. While the traditional elements of a play constitute a significant portion of such a performance, the most discernible aspect is the combination of storytelling and playacting to establish a connection with the intended audience. Use of complex literary devices like images and metaphors further enables the audience to perceive the multi-layered perspectives presented in the ceremony.

The Native American consciousness is shaped both by communal marginalization and a sense of dislocation which by itself is symptomatic of a larger sense of identity crisis. Having been in the mode of migration ever since the sixteenth century, the Native American stories of systematic exploitation have largely gone unrecorded. There were two reasons for this. First, most of the written literature, that too in English, of the Native Americans happened only at the beginning of the twentieth century and these for the most part were devoted to propagating the idea of the "noble savage". Secondly, the systematic "assimilation" that had been originally conceived of by George Washington in the late 18th century to "civilize" the Natives ensured their dislocation. Since performances were built around legends, history of the community and ceremonies, there was a significant impact on them when the communities were broken up and displaced. By extension, the attempts to engage with the mainstream cultural discourse were also limited. Moreover,

the vast range and variety of performances ensured that contemporary Native American Theatre often received limited critical and scholarly attention (Janet Neil Snyder 453).

Mary “Te Ata” Thompson Fisher (1895 – 1995) was one of the earliest pioneers to make significant attempts at forging an aesthetic for contemporary Native American theatre. While discussing her contributions, Christy Stanlake remarks that Te Ata’s career “represents the many challenges and difficult decisions Native American performers faced at the turn of the twentieth century” (2). She had pursued her theatrical career to the Broadway through the academic route.² Since her purpose was not just to achieve commercial success, but also to educate her audiences about the heritage of Native Americans, her shows often combined Native American storytelling with classical acting. Her one-woman performances were actually a protest against the stereotypical “exotic” roles in which she was often cast.

The earliest representations of Native American culture seemed to uphold the idea of the “noble savage” rather than expose the diffused realities of Native American life. This is precisely because they were reported, recorded and sometimes fictionalised by outsiders. Stanlake remarks that theatre studies during this period of time were often marked by a general inability to see a contemporary Native presence in American theatre. Sarah Blackstone makes the crucial point about the marginalization and the simplification of the Native American within the model of a stereotypical representation. She says, “The dominant white culture in American has long been content to view the Native American as a representative of a single homogenous culture (Indian) and within the binary construct of noble savage/barbarian” (9).

However, the Civil Rights movement changed the scenario for Native American Theatre. The political Civil Rights movement of 1960s provided the necessary push for people to celebrate their ethnicity and to view themselves as far from being the constituents of a melting pot that was called America. A greater need was felt to draw public attention to the issues affecting the Native Americans. Vine Deloria Jr used the word “Red Power” to describe a growing sense of pan Indian identity amongst the Native Americans in the 1960s. The primary objective of the Red Power movement as far as literature was concerned was to reclaim the representations of Native Americans and to draw public attention to the issues affecting Native Americans especially in a marginalised and dislocated context. Further, the Red Power Movement promoted a revival of traditional religion and ceremonies (Jenkins 159).

Drama became a medium for doing this because in 1960s a combination of the experimental theatre and the political motivations created a fertile ground for the formation of Native American theatre companies. These theatre companies were not just devoted to the preservation and transmission of the original rites and rituals of the Native American culture, but also to viewing them from the dislocated and marginalised perspective and see what stays at the end of the whole process.

The Native American Renaissance in Drama was signalled by the establishment of the Institute of American Indian Arts in 1962 through a Congressional charter. The objective of this academy was to offer Native students a formal education in Arts tempered by Native American creative processes and traditions (Stanlake 8). The Theatre Department, started in 1969, was devoted to studying the dramaturgical expressions that were central to the Native American theatre. In 1974, the Native Theatre School was

established in Toronto for the creation of academic and educational environment to support the development of Native actors, playwrights and directors. In addition to this, groups like the Thunderbird Theatre and Native American Theatre Ensemble were quite active in the areas of performance and playwriting.

The Spiderwoman Theatre blended fantasy and reality to examine issues of identity in the past and the present. In the process, feminist sensibilities were combined with Native American dramaturgical elements to portray the deeper insecurities at the core of a Native woman's consciousness. Formed in 1976 by the three sisters Lisa Mayo, Gloria Miguel and Muriel Miguel, it is the oldest running women's theatre company in North America (Larry Abbott 166). Though the materials and the techniques used by them were freewheeling, they adhered to the traditional pattern of story weaving, a direct inspiration from the Hopi goddess Kokyanwuuti, who taught people how to weave. The weaving aspect of their performance appears in the interweaving of the types of stories which include personal memories, family stories, traditional myths, songs and events etc. With the help of an improvisatory style of narrative discourse, they used theatre to draw the attention of their audiences to serious issues related to identity crisis. In fact, with *Sun, Moon and Feather* in 1981, they began to solely focus on issues relating to the representation of Native American women. The significant aspect of the Spiderwoman Theatre was their emphasis on non-exclusivity since they often worked with artists of Native and non-Native heritage.

The establishment of Native Voices at the Illinois State University in 1994 represents a significant shift in the approach of the Native American theatre companies. Far from allying with the Civil Rights movement, or the feminist theatre groups,

professional Native American theatre companies began to forge creative partnerships with organizations that could increase the visibility of Native American theatre in the commercial domain. Native Voices is an example of one such instance for the creation of scripts for commercial theatre. In 1999, Native Voices partnered with Los Angeles' Autry Museum to create Native Voices at the Autry. Project HOOP (Honouring Our Origins and People through Native Theatre, Education and Community Development), established in 1997, works on the premise that "theatre is one of the most accessible performing arts". It functions in alliance with the University of California, Los Angeles. In 2005, the Smithsonian's National Museum of the American Indian launched the Native Theatre Program, which has an inclusive vision of producing Native American plays for Native and non-Native audiences. In 1997, the Native American Women Playwrights Archive, which remains the most comprehensive resource domain for Native American Women playwrights, was established in collaboration with the Miami University. The organization, which welcomes playwrights "at any level of development", strives to "identify playwrights, collect and preserve their work, try to make it widely known, and encourage performances and continued creativity".

The most immediate shift in perspective that we can see in plays by Native American playwrights is their effort to ensure that their works do not just become "informed insider commentaries" but draw a correlation with their life experiences. By implication the processes of such theatre would include attempts to portray and objectify experiences, the progression of the characters towards survival in the context of dislocation and marginalization, and the correlation between art and life experiences. Stanlake defines Native American drama as a field of theatre which focuses on plays

authored by members of indigenous nations of the American Western hemisphere. She describes such plays as both “secular” and “intertribal” since they are generally not tied down to any specific Native American religion. Moreover, they address issues which are relevant to most of the people across the Native Americans, rather than bearing allegiance to any single tribe (17).

While contemporary Native American drama has assumed the “secular” and the “intertribal” nature over a period of time, it becomes crucial to note that much of the development in Native American theatre took on the aspect of resistance against colonization and the resulting marginalization. This resistance usually appeared in the form of challenging the traditional Western dramatic structure through various experiments in the idea of time and the narrative patterns. However, contemporary Native American plays like those of Diane Glancy also present an interesting alternative vision of drama as a site for healing and survival. This necessitates the conception of Native American theatre as a theatre in flux but not as a monolithic canon of reference. It encompasses all issues of identity ranging from social and family ties to cultural and religious affiliations by extending the boundaries of theatre. For instance, in her plays, Glancy often presents a powerful “alternate vision” of how the margins of theatre can be extended into the personal and the spiritual, all in the hope of creating a space for survival. While doing so, Glancy joins the ranks of numerous women playwrights of the United States, who were also forging their attempts at creating a space for the emergence of the woman’s voice, with all its attendant conflicts and ironies. For a better comprehension of Glancy’s location as a mixed breed Native American Woman playwright, it also becomes essential to consider certain significant women playwrights

of the United States, who have also tried to create such “alternate visions”, working especially from a marginalised context.

Helen Krich Chinoy remarked in an essay: “It has not been easy to see a female network in the composite art of theatre or to find a sense of “we-consciousness” among actresses, playwrights, designers, directors and producers” (*Sourcebook* 23). During the 1960s and 70s, the feminist movement in the United States tried to correct this glaring lacuna by providing the necessary fillip to create the crucial “we-consciousness” and pave the way for increased visibility for American women playwrights. Betty Friedan’s *The Feminine Mystique* (1963) helped women realize that they were not alone in feeling that they were imprisoned. Hence, the personal and the individual became the political and the collective. To depict the processes involved in such a transformation, the experimental theatres provided the necessary processual and aesthetic support. Workshop theatres became popular and the idea of “script in motion” gained currency because there were playwrights like Maria Irene Fornes who structured their script based on audience response. Most of these playwrights or groups did not work for the commercial theatre. Since their ultimate aim was to raise the consciousness and awareness among women, they mostly functioned as non-profit ventures. In a way, the playwrights of this period were in a transitional phase since their efforts were to bring the experiences of women from the periphery to literally the centre of the stage.

Megan Terry worked towards a theatre which was radically different from the “commercially closed theatre” of Broadway. Her plays focused on capturing the environment of the women who try to redefine their lives in terms of their relationships with community, society and men. As a result, “transformation” as a means of

dramatizing the instability of character became a central convention of her plays (Sally Burke 153). Naturally this involved a disruption of the conventions of a realist theatre. Transformation scenes became very essential to the politics of writing a play. The new understanding was that women's experiences are not linear but fluid in nature which means that the action in the play should proceed contiguously. A natural byproduct of such transformation scenes and the attendant fluid narratives was the establishment of the contexts in which sharing and empathy between the female characters became an achievable goal. Terry's *Calm Down Mother* (1964) had three woman characters assuming the various roles as opposed to the usual norm of one character assaying a single role. *Viet Rock* (1966) was the play that brought critical attention to Terry's work, by its virtue of being the first play to discuss the fall out of the Vietnam War on the life of the American public. It was also the first rock musical ever written. Terry's objective was to survey the justifications for the Vietnam War and expose that there was indeed nothing that was "beautiful" about it. The play abounded in images and settings that allowed for transformations between characters and contexts. In a manner symptomatic of breaking the barriers between the performers and the audience, the performers walk into the audience asking questions regarding the mindless death unleashed by war. *Approaching Simone* (1969) was different from her earlier works because of its focus on a single woman. The ensemble element makes its presence felt in the externalisation of Simone's experiences, while the other actors take on different elements of characterization and also function as a Greek Chorus. This enables Simone to live through various transformations, literally evolving from one position to another. Helene Keyssar feels that Simone's suicide at the age of 34 appears as both weakness and strength in Terry's play

(*Cambridge Companion* 185). While suicide by itself is an act imbued with negativity and characterized by withdrawal, in Terry's play, it attains the status of asserting the autonomy of the self, an idea that finds echoes in Marsha Norman's *night Mother* (1983) and Diane Glancy's *The Lesser Wars* (1999).

Issues of female autonomy figure prominently in Lorraine Hansberry's *A Raisin in the Sun* (1959), which also focused on the ambivalence and the exclusion that surrounds the idea of "American Dream". With its hints of feminine strength, Alice Childress' *Wines in the Wilderness* (1969) attempted to streamline the contradictions raised by the conflicts between the values and aspirations of the middle class society and the Black consciousness, more specifically, the consciousness of a Black woman who is determined to remain unconventional. Helene Keyssar describes the character of Tommy as "one of the first genuinely independent women of the America Stage" (*Feminist Theatre* 33) who fights for her autonomy within the context of responsibility and trust. Through such characters Childress not only questioned the stereotyped images of women that theatre had traditionally portrayed but also offered a correction to the stage representation of women with reference to history and culture.

Adrienne Kennedy had her first experience of racial and cultural hatred in the Ohio State University. The engendered anger had a lasting impression on her sensibilities and later found expression in her plays. Quite pertinently, Kennedy termed her plays as a "growth of images" (Sally Burke 162). In her quest to depict the fragmented realities of the self, she fell back on exploring the inner psychological questions that arise directly as a result of the sociocultural collisions from a marginalised perspective. The inspiration for *Funnyhouse of a Negro* (1964) apparently came during an extended trip that Kennedy

had taken of Europe and Africa. She felt that the colonialist power of Europe was aptly symbolized by a mammoth statue of Queen Victoria which she had seen in front of the Buckingham Palace. The play was coloured with expressionistic techniques used to portray the consciousness of Sarah, a Negro woman who is marginalised under the twin banes of being a woman and a Negro. Race and gender collide to create a “funnyhouse” in her mind, which can be discerned in the conflict she faces between killing her father and forgiving him for the Blackness that he has inflicted upon her. In a way, the play takes a look at those very social and cultural structures that contribute to the dissolution of a woman’s brain into a “funnyhouse”. This is typified by Sarah’s fragmentation into four selves – Duchess of Hapsburg, Queen Victoria Regina, Jesus and Patrice Lumumba. Since the act of subsuming one’s self within the confines of another identity is fraught with tension which borders on violence, Sarah hangs herself at the end of the play. Therefore suicide emerges not as a construct signifying resignation, but as a mode of asserting the autonomy of Sarah’s fragmented sense of identity.

The 1970s saw a kind of alignment of the feminist groups, which had its impact on theatre. The most powerful and cost-effective medium to reach out to communities of women was theatre. The feminist theatre groups would perform even in attics for selected audiences. The issues now were not just those of greater autonomy for women, but those of a greater need for sharing of experiences and the telling of stories that had hitherto been confined to the domestic realms of a household. There was a greater critical interest that was displayed towards women playwrights, due to the sheer proliferation of their mostly non-commercial theatre groups. These efforts were mostly directed towards raising the consciousness of women towards the increasingly complex issues that they

have to negotiate through their lives. The issues could range from silent abuse validated by the patriarchal norm of the community that the woman is living in to pushing the case for lesbianism and heralding it as a part of the woman's sense of autonomy to choose her partner.

What remains more pertinent to this study is the fact that the quest for identity assumed greater complexity during this period, with the introduction of psychoanalytic techniques to examine the issues of race, gender, and identity. Consciousness raising of women became the primary motive of most of the plays written during this period. If we consider the feminist theatre groups of this period, the emphasis seemed to be more on staging the personal experience of the characters on stage. Charlotte Canning notes that the development of feminist theatre groups was made possible through the belief in the importance of everyday experiences (*Feminist Theatres in the U.S.A* 39). The most widely accepted principle of the feminists was that women's oppression worked by obscuring what women experienced. Perhaps the greatest contribution of the feminist theatre, as observed by Charlotte Rea, was to use as their raw material an area of experience that was virtually unknown in theatre history: the consciousness of women as seen through women's consciousness (*Sourcebook* 37). The Woman's Theatre Council of which Megan Terry was a part became a model for the feminist groups. This new network of women playwrights used theatre as a medium to look at both their past and their present. Since sustained narratives based on the traditional structure of beginning, middle and end were found to be incompatible with the issues which these women wanted to explore, brokenness and fragmentation dominated the structural patterns of the plays.

After the dominance of the feminist theatre groups in the seventies, there followed in the eighties, the inevitable period of decline. The reasons for the decline of the feminist theatre groups were quite obvious. In most cases, funding and power struggles in addition to a lack of a firm ideological cause and craft of staging played a major role in the demise of theatre groups. Helene Keyssar also identified tensions amongst the group members about race, poverty, gender and target audiences as one of the causes for their decline (*Cambridge Companion* 176). Another reason that could be ascribed to the non-proliferation of the feminist theatre groups is that the feminist concerns saw a major shift in their focus after the eighties. Quite naturally, the new question was what would make a play “feminist”.

New ideas on women and their place in the social and the cultural dynamics led to the realisation that a reworked understanding of culture and faith was needed to come to terms with the conflicting demands placed on them. Helene Keyssar feels that after this period, dominance of the plays which just superficially describe the themes of sexuality, sisterhood, mother-daughter relationships and female autonomy happened mostly because of the need to make gender issues palatable to the wider audience of the theatre. According to her there is no deeper analysis of the social, cultural and political structures that contributed to this problem in the first place. She places Marsha Norman and Wendy Wasserstein in such a category of playwrights since they fired the commonplace events that happen in the lives of women to the heights of dramatic intensity, thereby ensuring that their plays, though they engaged with women and their lives, retreated to the form and structure of a comedy of manners and for the most part were based on sustained narratives. For example, Keyssar criticizes Wendy Wasserstein’s *Uncommon Women and*

Others (1977) for its inability to break the stereotyped images of women and confirming the message that women have been “trained to accept a limited set of options and restricted levels of aspirations”, an idea that can possibly extended to *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988) as well.

Laurin Porter feels that plays by Marsha Norman comes closest to being awarded a canonical status since they present a strong feminist vision, exploring what happens when women are allowed to author their own stories (*Cambridge Companion* 200). Norman’s use of realistic structures invited criticism, especially from material feminists who argued that her plays do not form part of the corpus of feminist drama precisely because the feminist sensibilities do not permit realistic modes of narration. However, when we view realism only as a mode and not as an ideology, Norman’s dramatic strategies become agencies for revealing the realities behind the masks that the women assume and the hollowness of the beliefs that they had been taught to believe in. Laurin Porter’s argument shifts the focus of the feminist play from structural devices to narrative strategies. For example, *Getting Out* (1977) has a realistic structure but an unconventional narrative in which the past and the present often coalesce. In addition to locating the source of the disturbance in the landscape and the environment of the protagonist, the play also looks at her mindscape thereby leading us more on the path of empathy rather than prescriptive solutions.

Ntozake Shange carried the idea of experimentation a step forward with her verse drama *for colored girls who have considered suicide* (1975) which incorporated verse with drama. Shange realised the dramatic potential of this ensemble which was originally a combination of seven poems meant to be performed. She used song and dance to unite

these fragments and created what she called a “choereopoem”. She proved that serious drama, especially the variety that discusses the state of women, can always include music and dance simply because music and dance are not just cultural realities but a part of the consciousness of Black experience. The narrative in the play proceeds on the lines of storytelling which is a major component of the Black consciousness. Through these narratives, the play makes a powerful appeal for sharing of pain and suffering amongst the community of women. Quite appropriately there is no single protagonist because rarely do the women initiate the actions that result in such horrifying consequences for them. By this very gesture, Shange brings the cultural landscape into question and holds it responsible for the experiences of these women.

Wendy Wasserstein’s plays examine both the traditional idea of womanhood and the ideologies perpetuated by the feminist groups and expose their hollowness in the context of the individual lives of women. Caught between two conflicting sets of values, she felt that women of her generation were left confused about what they should stand for, an irony brought out in *Uncommon Women and Others*. In *Isn’t It Romantic* (1983), Jamie’s parents are circumscribed by a mode of thinking according to which a woman should subsume her interests to sustain her married life. Even a well-educated art historian like Heidi in *The Heidi Chronicles* (1988), who makes it her mission to trace the missing women artists, realises her true sense of liberation by adopting a child. The only element of subversion seems to be the fact that she doesn’t see marriage as a necessary means for attaining motherhood.

Wasserstein’s creativity lay in transforming the personal crises of these women into a political statement. *An American Daughter* (1997) had for its concerns, the mid-life

crisis that plagues women, especially when it comes to a reassessment of social and political goals against a constantly changing set of values and traditions. Her work explores with a sense of wistfulness the impossibility of women to “have it all” all the time – within the confines of a sexist society and an ideology like feminism which changes its rules right in the middle of the game.

Anna Deavere Smith’s plays *Fires in the Mirror* (1993) and *Twilight: Los Angeles* (1993) are the narratives of the responses of a community to an event that had the effect of imploding the constituent structure of the society from within and laying bare the paradoxes lying at its core. The canvas moves to a macro perspective as Smith tries to capture at the essence of “identity in motion” and what it implies with reference to the larger idea of “American character”. The text of the play is sourced in the interviews conducted by Anna Deavere Smith over a period of time. Her plays were initially meant for the audience who were directly related to the social collisions from which she sourced her work. In some ways, she approached the dimensions of documentary theatre in her plays.

Feminist criticism in the seventies and eighties was caught in a conflict between aesthetics and ideology (Jill Dolan 94). The reason for this was the realisation that the experiences of women are bound to be different and most of the times fragmented due to ethnic and cultural factors. This meant that the idea of a “collective” just fell short of capturing the conflicting identity of the American woman. Accommodation of diversity meant that there was no single mode for treating feminism because the intersections between race, gender and ethnicity generated a plurality of experiences and perspectives.

This did have a bearing on the critical interest assigned to plays written by women American playwrights. For example, in a play like *The Heidi Chronicles* by Wendy Wasserstein, much of the criticism was focussed on the final image of Heidi holding an adopted baby girl. This was construed as a retreat to the patriarchal ideology which defined the roles of women in the context of their childbearing ability. Even the play *An American Daughter* was criticized for Judith's efforts to bear a child through artificial means. In the play *Third*, Laurie's friend discovers her sense of being through marriage.

Krolloke and Sorensen, in their essay "Three Waves of Feminism" situate the third wave of feminism in the "post colonial and the post socialist world order, in the context of information and neoliberal, global politics" (2). Such a sourcing marks the movement away from the ideas of universal womanhood, and focuses critical attention on the articulation of the manner in which women negotiate the complex intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class and age related concerns (17). This also implies that the idea of identifying with a group had limited tenability, which could partly explain why many feminist theatre groups could not survive for long. The fundamental characteristic of such a shift also engendered an acceptance of a chaotic world while simultaneously embracing ambiguity and the willingness to form new alliances (19). Janelle Reinelt describes such a condition as "post feminism", a state in which though there is nothing to join and no clear "woman" to be, the concerns about equality, free expression, power, respect and sexual subjectivity are still present (20).

When women discovered their ability to relate across differences, feminism moved from theorizing differences to theorizing the spaces in-between the differences. Since the differences are engendered by social, cultural and historical factors, the process

of negotiating the differences across the various axes like gender and power and social structures assumes the pattern of relational positioning, which can also be described as “migratory feminism in the borderlands” (Friedman 68). While multicultural feminism clearly arose out of a need to theorize the “differences” among women, Susan Friedman postulates that the vital and real longings for connection between differences are equally important in an interactive understanding of gender, especially in relation to societal stratifications and multiple constituents of identity. She says: “the interplay of cultural markers of identity depends on an oscillation of sameness and difference that is historically embedded within the context of complex power relations” (76). Such a theorizing of what Susan Friedman Stanford would describe as “migratory feminism in the borderlands” is shared by Diane Glancy. She admits in an interview that feminism, as defined traditionally, can be a limiting term precisely because in the present context, the role of women is “too-conflicted, too ambivalent and too hard-core to look at” (*Conversation 6*). When placed against a socially hybridized context in which the characters are often entrapped in a collision between cultures, Glancy’s women are characterized by an inner search for meaning, especially from their relational perspectives on connections and differences. Glancy recognizes that there is a complex mixture of culture which only “makes us find our own ways to live”. There are many different borderlands, and even America, according to her is a borderland because “the melting pot, the oneness, the one nation under God never was and never will be” (*Conversation 3*). Therefore, the longing for connection can be as crucial as the perception of difference.

From this point of view, Glancy’s plays can be considered as “scripts of relational positionality”. They establish the perspective of a migratory borderland which enables the

conception of identity as a fluid site which can be understood differently depending on the vantage points of their formation and function. Glancy's women operate from this migratory borderland. Their location as mediators is characterized by their ability to see beyond the binary categories of "seen" and "unseen". While they address the multiple loyalties of a working woman, a faithful wife, a divorced spouse or a bereaved companion, they move between conflicting cultural heritages rather than claiming racial and ethnic roots. Through their cultural narratives, they are led towards possibilities for contact amidst new paths of connection and relatedness.

In *The Sacred Hoop*, Paula Gunn Allen proposes a model for the classification of American Indian literature into "several interlocking categories" (4). The major divisions are the traditional literature and genre literature of the present. She further classifies traditional literature into ceremonial and popular varieties, depending on the context in which the literature is used. While discussing the genre literature of the present, she stresses that though the categorization can be done on the basis of the classic western categories such as poetry, fiction or drama, structural and thematic elements from the oral tradition often intrude into the structure of the works. Such an oral tradition is fundamentally defined by the virtue of its "continuous flux" which ensures that the oral tradition is not just a record of people's culture, but a significant "creative source of collective and individual selves" (224).

Glancy conceives of the oral tradition as a fire, representing the spirit of the people. She describes it as an "invisible library" (*Claiming Breath* 103) which often ends up sourcing the cultural aspects of a person's identity. However, the process of sourcing becomes a tensional affair, especially given the context in which Glancy situates her

works. Glancy's characters often find themselves in a marginalised context, which is further exacerbated by the sociocultural collisions which engender ambiguities. Such a context demands for a fundamental shift in the manner in which the characters view their historical and cultural past. While certain aspects of the Native American storytelling method like the creation of a multi-layered perspective and the circularity of action are obvious in Glancy's plays, it can also be sensed that the Native American oral discourse is often situated in a hybridized context, what she would describe as the "margin between native storytelling and western theater". Regarding the stylistic aim and purpose of her work, she says:

The kind of work that most engages me is the margin between native storytelling and western theater. These are non-mixers; To get the circular and sometimes repetitive native storytelling onto a linear, usually point-driven western stage is what creative native work is about. (sic) (*Writings* 11)

Thus the presence of the oral tradition in Glancy's plays can be discerned in her persistent efforts to locate a marginalised Native voice on the Western stage. Glancy says in *Further(Farther)*:

Dramatic language is like electricity. Which is hard to explain. It accesses invisibility and all things going to it. A play is a small town. With an interstate bypassing it. Yet connected to the power plant by the river. A new oral tradition with breath that is the condition of performance. A planet of being. A location. A vectoring that is a conflation of crossroads in different perspectives. (sic) (200)

When she conceives of a play as a “vectoring”, the implication is that her plays engender a conflation of crossroads in different perspectives. Such a conflation is suggestive of the idea that the solution to the spiritual conflicts lies in the recognition of a multi-layered perspective, which emerges from the variety of marginalised voices which Glancy tries to integrate in her plays. Hence, her writing becomes an act of “wrioting” (*Claiming Breath* 9).

The women who people Diane Glancy’s plays move radically and sometimes arbitrarily between the various perspectives to reach the vantage position of healing and compassion, because therein lies the key to their survival. In her preface to *American Gypsy* Glancy states: “An American Gypsy is a Native American who knows migration and rootlessness” (44). The play, she continues to say, is about migration and finding roots after the migration is over. Such a pattern can be extended to all of her plays. Conflicts triggered by the sociocultural collisions are negotiated through a process of “re-visioning” and sometimes “re-positioning” of the “usable past” that has been handed down in the form of myths and memories.

Such “re-visioning” or “re-positioning” is usually contingent upon the potential for healing generated within the dimension of the play, a process which can be termed as “enucleation.” What Glancy says about the enucleatory aspect of poetry³ holds good for her drama as well. While her work comes from what is happening in her life, her ultimate aim in writing is to achieve what she would describe as that point of clarity characterized by the strangeness of the poet to the very world he heals and clarifies.

Further, Glancy traces her conception of performance to a childhood memory, when she had been denied the chance to perform. When such an aspect of

marginalization is impinged on the idea of performance, the word “performance” takes on a whole new implication. In fact, she equates writing with performance because it is a process oriented endeavour through which the audience feels the performance of the words onto the avenue of the written text. She says in “Bowling”:

I remember being denied performance. In grade school, I wanted to be in a play and was not chosen. But standing on the sidelines, watching others act, I began to feel the performance of the words, which for me, would make its way onto the avenue of written text...for me, the written word is the performance...Writing is a performance for me. (*Writings* 3-4)

Glancy has been more often acknowledged for her poetry and fiction, rather than for her contribution to the Native American theatre. In fact, much of the critical commentary on her work has been devoted to her novel *Pushing the Bear* (1996) which deals retrospectively with the mass migration of the Cherokees in 1839. However, in spite of receiving numerous awards, her anthologies of plays *War Cries: Plays by Diane Glancy* (1997) and *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* (2002) have received limited critical attention. Her crucial contribution to critical perspectives on American drama, which in turn inform her own dramatic work, has also received limited critical coverage.

However, this trend is slowly witnessing a change in recent times. Kimberley Blaeser, in her introduction to *War Cries*, identified the most significant aspect of Glancy’s plays – the understanding of literary arts as a healing force – an aspect that is very crucial to issues related to survival (vi).⁴ Birgit Dawes, in her essay, “Fox-trot with Me, Baby: Glancy’s Dramatic Work” provides essential perspectives on the four

cornerstones of Glancy's dramatic theory.⁵ (*Salt Companion* 137) Christy Stanlake devotes a great deal of critical attention to the play *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer* in her study of the distinctive discourses of Native American philosophies which relate themselves to the theatre's performative medium.⁶ While each section of the present study will adopt the perspective needed to further the arguments, the overall model of analysis will necessarily include critical aspects drawn from the discourses of the oral traditions which are fundamental to Native American literature.

For this study, the primary texts will include plays from the anthologies *War Cries*, *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* and *The Sum of Winter*. In addition to these, *Salvage*, an unpublished play will also be included. To inform the analysis, references will be made to the critical works of Gerald Vizenor whose theory of survivance finds echoes in Glancy's own work. In addition to this, references will be made to Paula Gunn Allen's views on the social and the spiritual systems of the Native American society. Susan Stanford's perspectives on migratory feminism will provide a useful point of departure for studying the feminist perspective in Glancy's plays. In addition to the above, Homi K. Bhabha's views on the interstitial model of cultural negotiation provides interesting possibilities for the acts of empowerment, which are for the most part specific to the women characters of her plays.

In the second chapter of the study, titled "Echoing Voices and Stories" attempt will be made to analyse certain significant elements of Glancy's dramatic discourse. Glancy's literary productions across multiple genres have often been the result of a tensional negotiation of her "marginalised" location. In her works, she attempts to create a dramatic space for the emergence of various marginalised voices by consciously

conflating the boundaries between the past and the present. When the personal and the generational are intertwined with the sociocultural collisions, interesting possibilities are engendered for the fluid development of the narratives. In a seemingly post-modernist discourse employed in her plays, memory acts as a controlling force. Further, the integration of the trickster discourse also permits her to integrate the possibilities for echoing various voices which cause the narratives to happen. Since her dramatic focus is on the “intercalation”⁷ between various worlds, the trickster aspect of the discourse permits her to freewheel between forms, genres and worlds using the aspect of fluidity suggested by the trickster figure. This enables her to combine elements of different genres into what she would describe as recognition of self in a “cross-genre writing of democracy”⁸ (*Further* 203-204).

It is possible to discern that Glancy’s use of imagery, while facilitating shifting contexts and meanings, approximates to Gayathri Spivak’s concept of catachresis – a tactical maneuver that involves wrenching particular images and concepts out of their place within a particular narrative and using them to open up new areas of meaning. Further, the tensional aspect is also typified by the patterns of contradiction and irony that run through the dramatic discourse, which enable the dramatist to graduate to a theatre based on negotiating an uncontainable sense of identity.⁹

The third chapter, titled ‘Patterns of Spiritual Negotiation’ will attempt to trace the patterns of survival in Glancy’s plays. The metaphor that can sum up the whole process of spiritual negotiation in Glancy’s plays is that of the Sweat Lodge Ceremony, which has for its ultimate aim, the healing of the individual through purification. However, political overtones often emerge in such processes, especially when the

characters are located in a liminal position between contact cultures and religions. In this context, Vizenor's theory of the mythic, material and the visionary motion¹⁰, the notion of personal and visionary sovereignty¹¹, and the idea of transmotion¹² become useful aspects to trace the conversion of the personal to the spiritual.

The enactment of a Native American play itself can be considered to be a ceremony, which has for its purpose, an engendering of healing, typified by the tensional spiritual negotiations of her characters. Such negotiations in Glancy's plays can be studied with reference to the patterns of vision quest and the patterns of ceremony as obvious in the recontextualised myths, rituals and artifacts. The pattern of the ceremonial spiritual negotiation also happens in the mediational mode, especially when the characters position themselves as participants of both Native American as well as Christian traditions, a position shared by the dramatist herself.

The fourth section of the study titled "From the Personal to the Spiritual – The Empowered Women" will attempt to examine the location of Glancy's women characters who often emerge empowered albeit their marginalised sociocultural profile. This is essentially typified in the crucial roles assigned to them by the playwright – they function as healers, visionaries, and creators of meaning.

Glancy's plays reveal that the sociocultural profiles of her women have transformed over a period of time. When such a location is examined against the culturally assigned positions of Native American women before colonization, it is possible to see that Glancy's feminism is characterized by an inner quest for meaning. She uses the word "she-donism" – the pursuit of she-pleasure – to describe such a process. The sociocultural and political undercurrent involved in locating her women

characters as mediators of intense religious experiences necessarily includes a mode of thought which looks for points of interconnectedness between cultures and events rather than theorizing the differences engendered by the marginalised location of her characters. As a result, the processes of mediation are tensional and problematic, especially when her women characters are placed in a complex social matrix in which gender and race operate in tandem with other constituents of a fragmented sense of identity. As a result, the act of connecting the personal to the spiritual is subverted at a very fundamental level, signifying that “newness” is an insurgent act of cultural transition.

This implies that the process of empowering women necessarily involves a deconstruction of the patriarchal structures. However, Glancy goes a step further and includes access to spirituality as a crucial marker for the empowerment of her women. This can be clearly discerned by her attempts to contextually recast traditional myths, images and legends, the animal transformations permitted to them and the idea of a “reinvented oral tradition”, to which most of her women characters subscribe. From this, it can be concluded that the journey towards “ani-yun-wiyu”¹³ is an intense spiritual quest, defined by the locational space of her characters.

In the concluding chapter of the study, titled “The Comparisons and Controversies” attempt will be made to explore certain critical and controversial aspects of Glancy’s work with reference to other American women playwrights and her status as a Native American Woman playwright. Identification with the Native American heritage might be viewed as an unsubstantiated claim especially with reference to her literary works. Her dramatic narratives often seem to be assuming a locational characteristic especially when she identifies her characters as belonging to a particular tribe. But the

critical positioning in her plays moves away from “tribal centered” criticism and explores the elasticity of terms like borders and culture. In fact, in the introduction to *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, she talks about the interlocking of cultures being an aspect of the new wave oral tradition that she is trying to create (20).

An aspect of her work that has attracted criticism is her missionary zeal and recourse to the Christian model of conversion and assimilation. When we examine the syncretic nature of Glancy’s discourse and the transcultural model of appropriation, it becomes clear that Glancy’s transreligious position is reflected in the specific engagement with cultural differences and points of interconnectedness.

Another controversial aspect of Glancy plays is the perpetual reference to broken or dysfunctional families and relationships. Such a theme perpetuates the broken nature of Native American consciousness at a larger level. While the reservation life had resulted in various issues like alcoholism and breakdown of social institutions, the restrained access to language and culture ensured that Native Americans had limited connection to their spiritual systems of thought. However, it is to be noted that the act of brokenness in Glancy’s plays functions only to mirror the systematic denigration of the Native American self. That is why in most of the plays, Glancy reports or hints at the causes for the dysfunction, rather than delineate them in their entirety. Her mission statement seems to be the recovery of the spiritual aspect of one’s personality amidst the broken fragments of Native American consciousness. The act of brokenness, both at the structural and the thematic level enables the dramatist to embed messages of hope and survival within the disrupted discourse of the plays.

To further explore Glancy's position with reference to the critical terms of the study, attempt will be made to compare and contrast the operation of culture, conflict and social fabric in the plays of Marsha Norman (1947-) , Wendy Wasserstein (1950-2006) and Anna Deavere Smith (1950-). The justification for the comparison arises from the fact that issues related to marginalised identity are central the work of these women playwrights as well. Marsha Norman is an White American woman playwright, Anna Deavere Smith is a Black American Woman playwright and Wendy Wasserstein was a Jewish American woman playwright. The point of unity between these playwrights arises from the fact that they conceived of their drama as a platform for examining politics involved in the processes related to survival in the context of the tensional sociocultural location of their women characters. Diane Glancy's plays capture the essential ambivalence arising out of racial, gender, social and cultural conflict. Naturally, the developing identity that she chronicles is of the 'amorphous variety' constantly changing directions and patterns in line with the changing social matrix.

An outcome of such a process of constant quarrel with one's self against a fragmented sociocultural context is the emergence of a multiplicity of voices emerge as a consequence of such an artistic engagement. This provides for a non-linear sense of action, blurring between worlds, and forms, and the operation of dynamic metaphors and images within the structural patterns of the play, an aspect that will be explored in the next chapter.

The delimitations to this study include the following two aspects. Firstly, primary texts for analysis have been considered as texts in print and not as drama in performance. While such an approach can be substantiated by the equating the act of writing itself to a

performance, it is also to be noted that in a removed context, the access to the performances of these plays has been limited. Secondly, though Diane Glancy has inherited multiple identities, cultures and religions, the critical thrust in this study has been on the Native American aspect of her profile as echoed in a translocated context. Further scope for research arises precisely in the play of identities, cultures and religions as perceived not only in Glancy's dramatic works, but also her fiction, poetry and essays .

The references to the following plays will be made from the anthology *War Cries – Weebjob, Stick Horse, Bull Star, Halfact, Segwohi, The Truth Teller, Mother of Mosquitos, The Best Fancy Dancer the Pushmataha Pow Wow's Ever Seen and One Horse*. The references to the following plays will be made from the anthology *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays – The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for Deer Dance, The Women Who Loved House Trailers, American Gypsy, Jump Kiss, The Lesser Wars, The Toad (Another Name for the Moon) Should Have a Bite and Further (Farther): Creating Dialogue to Talk About Native American Plays*. The plays *The Collector of a Three-Cornered Stamp* and *The Sum of Winter* are from the anthology *The Sum of Winter*. Similarly, Wasserstein's *Uncommon Women and Others* and *Isn't It Romantic* is a part of the anthology *The Heidi Chronicles and Other Plays*. Hence, the pagination for quotations from these plays will refer to the pages in the anthologies, as available with me.

This study also includes an appendix of an email interview conducted with Diane Glancy. The seventh edition of the MLA Handbook has been followed for the references and the bibliography.

Notes

1. Thrice the Five Civilized Tribes Playwright Laureate in 1984-86, 1988-90 and 1994-96; Aspen Theater Chamberlain Prize in 1988; the Oklahoma Theater Association Award in 1987; the Wordcraft Circle of Native Writers Playwriting Award in 1997; the Borderlands Theater Play Festival Award in 1990.

2. She was the first Native American student to graduate from the Oklahoma College for Women. She also took graduate classes in Acting at Carnegie Tech in Pittsburgh.

3. In *Claiming Breath*, Glancy combines two aspects of the term 'enucleation' and theorizes poetry as an agent of clarification and healing (74-75). Such an idea of enucleation can be extended to her plays as well.

4. Blaesar feels that each of the plays in the collection *War Cries* contains a spark of healing, an aide to survival.

5. Dawes identifies the four cornerstones as the pivotal power of storytelling, a processual aesthetics which is inseparable from an ethics of reception, the integration of cultural and political differences, and the confluence of diverse spiritual traditions.

6. In her study *Native American Drama: A Critical Perspective*, Stanlake demonstrates the working of platality, storytelling, tribalography and survivance with reference to dramaturgy.

7. The intercalated worlds are – the physical world, the dream world, the spirit beings, the ancestors, and the imaginative experience which is a strip of all between.

Such a conception of the dramatic world is clearly consistent with the idea of the migratory feminism in the borderlands proposed by Susan Friedman.

8. In *Further (Farther): Creating Dialogue*, while exploring the literary theory for Native American plays, Glancy uses the phrase “cross-genre writing of democracy” to explicate the importance of exchanging, relating and interacting with the various voices of a longer story. This implies that the boundaries of the dramaturgical tools can be extended and sometimes even blurred to accommodate such voices

9. For example, her first published play *Weebjob* (1997) has a clear conflict which directs the course of action in the play. However, in *The Toad Should Have a Bite* (2000), the focus is more on the question of representing an uncontainable sense of identity in terms of myths and cultural practices.

10. Christy Stanlake in *Native American Drama*, offers a comprehensive interpretation of Vizenor’s theory of mythic, material and visionary motion. Mythic motion relies on the trickster figure to illustrate that the Native American acts of deconstruction were sourced in the pre-existing Native practices. Material motion refers to patterns of resistance against stereotyping through the creation of art and identities that defy categorization. Visionary Motion refers to the person’s ability to apply the concept of transmotion to himself in order to attain a critical positioning that defies limitations (170).

11. In Vizenor’s conception, personal sovereignty includes the concept of national sovereignty to address the individual’s realization and the will to self-governance, opportunity to establish self-representation, and the choice to select or reflect elements of Native traditions within the ever-changing context of one’s personal life. The

third aspect of personal sovereignty can be easily correlated to Glancy's plays, especially from the spiritual point of view. Visionary sovereignty on the other hand, makes it possible for the creation of an in-between world from which characters are able to access both the material and the spiritual aspects of their life.

12. Vizenor defines Native transmotion as an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations. (*Fugitive Poses* 183) When applied to Glancy's plays, the aspect of transmotion can be discerned in the fluidity that operates between the material and non-material worlds and the animal transformations permitted to certain characters.

13. In an essay titled "Fragments/Shards", Glancy narrates her quest for her individual voice after her divorce using the pattern of a journey towards 'ani-yun-wiyu', a Cherokee term for the journey towards 'real people.' (*Claiming Breath* 52)

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Chapter 2

Echoing Voices and Stories

Diane Glancy's plays integrate aspects of post-modernist discourse like de-structuring of the text, the constant play of meanings, the disparate and fragmentary experiences, and the blurring of boundaries between reality and artifice, with Native American traditions of storytelling. Such a mode of work enables her to open new areas for intrusion of meaning, while negotiating a space for survival. The movement in her plays is towards a destination of understanding, which, in Glancy's words, assumes the framework of "a vectoring that is a conflation of crossroads in different perspectives" (*Further* 200). While her work involves radical experimentation in drama and performance, coupled with an integration of Native American dramaturgical elements, her artistic focus is on finding modes of survival and healing in the realm of art and performance.

According to Vizenor, memories have the visual aspect which creates a sense of motion and choices as far as stories and points of view are concerned. Hence "memories turn in stories" (*Postindian Conversations* 19). From this perspective, her act of playwriting becomes a dynamic process rather than a terminal endeavour. In conjunction with imagination, memory plays the crucial role of organizing and sometimes "dis-ordering" the patterns of recollection. Therefore, memory often controls the structure and the direction of the plays. A sample of the methodology which Glancy follows can be gleaned from her essay, "Endnotes on *Salvage* before the End Was found":

It was somewhere on Highway 2, that I passed a salvage yard. I remember at the edge of the highway, a corrugated fence, and the corner of a sandy

lot. I think the three characters in the play, Wolfert, Wolf and Memela got in my car. They rode with me a long time before I realized they were there. (*Writings* 14)

Since her intention is to capture the voices and the memories of the three characters that had “got” in her car, she consciously accommodates a plurality of voices into the structure of her plays. This necessitates the de-structuring of the plays which facilitates a space for the voices which are often silenced or marginalised. This kind of structure has an obvious source in Bakhtin whom Glancy credits as being an “instrumental” force in her work, especially with reference to the idea of multiple borders (*Conversation* 4).

She says in *Claiming Breath*, “Art is pacification and purification of old grievances, healing for those left behind when everybody else goes to school” (62). For the pacification and purification to happen, the old grievances have to be recollected through a complex web of recollection. In this aspect, we see Glancy approaching Vizenor’s idea of survivance¹— a continuous process of survival, which in her works integrates the patterns of exchange, relationship and interaction. Such a process is contingent on the recognition of a sense of identity which often rests in the points of contact between tribes, settlements and cultures, and also possibly between the performers as well. To create such a dramatic space, Glancy had to find a meeting point between the Western practices of theatre and the Native American culture of orality.

When Glancy says, “The kind of work that most engages me is the margin between native storytelling and western theatre” (sic) (*Writings* 11), it becomes obvious that she envisions neither the Native nor the Western traditions of theatre as monolithic

constructs. Though her engagement with Native American characters and culture may lead to the impression that her perspective is pan Indian, she often avoids describing her work as either “pure” or “hybrid.” Her admission of not having direct access to Cherokee culture² in fact reflects her opposition to the term “hybrid”³ since it presupposes an exclusion of the individual and the collective subjectivity of the colonized. The drama in Glancy’s plays arises precisely from the conception of individuals who as conscious subjects react to actions, modifying and adjusting their communities and cultures to new influences (Murdrooroo 108). Her experiments in drama are devoted to the discovery of “what elements of native stories survive the crossing into staged theater where the audience expects communication of some sort on some level yet carries the import of native voice” (sic) (*Writings* 11). In such experiments, memory primarily works as an open-ended construct. In plays where time functions as a linear construct, the myriad workings of memory are evident either due to dramatic visualization or an obvious blurring of boundaries between the physical and the spiritual world, which often borders on the ironical. For example in *Weebjob* (1997), the squash patch becomes Weebjob’s sacred “Canaan” which is a reworking of the Turtle Island Creation myth is possible.⁴

However, in some plays time seems to function in a non-linear frame of reference permitting the dramatist to make radical movements and connections between the past and the present. In such plays, memory functions mostly as an unconscious construct that moves seamlessly between the personal/cultural narratives and action of the play. For example in *The Collector of a Three-Cornered Stamp* (2006), the narrator moves from a range of perspectives from the Vietnam War to respect for the natural world and from there, to a conception of the process of creation itself. Memory not only permits an open-

ended structural pattern, but also aids the process of connecting the personal with the cultural. Glancy says in the introduction to the play, “I like to work with disconnected pieces that don’t seem to hold together, discovering a connective between them” (30). In the play, the three seemingly disconnected voices of a woman who remembers her husband’s return from the Vietnam, a woman who remembers a friend and the postage stamp as a spirit, are unified by the processes of creating meaning through a recovery of events passed. Therefore memory works to find points of connection between the personal and the cultural narratives.

Such an act of breaking the boundaries between genres and worlds using memory as a device has more to do with the “uncontainable” sense of identity that Glancy wanted to capture on her stage. In her plays, identity functions as a complex phenomenon that is influenced by historical, social and cultural collisions which bring into relief the fragmentary nature of Native American consciousness, thereby necessitating the element of “de-structuring” the play.

To begin with such an act of “de-structuring”, Glancy looks beyond the traditional classification of a play into acts and scenes. Sometimes her plays are divided into plates of earth, fragmentary journals of perspectives, sorties of a dance, or sometimes, simply sections. Such structures have a metaphoric import which is usually linked to the main thesis of the play. They often function as organic constructs that work at different levels contributing to the multivalency in the plays. In *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance* (1995), the breaking of boundaries between a dialogue and a monologue permits the dramatic play of voices which in turn allows for multiple readings of the play. At one level it puts women at the centre of experience while at another level

it illustrates the conflicts created by the generational gap between the Grandmother and the Girl. The structure of the play brings into relief the margins between the mythic world of the grandmother and the visible world of the granddaughter and offers the thesis that this margin can be negotiated through a compassionate acceptance of the contradictions that make up their sense of identity. Memory plays a vital role in ordering such a structure, by functioning in terms of leaps and bounds, thereby lending further support to the blurring of margins between a dialogue and a monologue. As Glancy states in the introduction of the play, aided by memory, the story moves like "...rain on a windshield. Between differing and unreliable experiences" (4).

In *Halfact* (1993), there is enough indication that the play is taking place in the mind of the Coyote Girl as she struggles to negotiate her rapidly changing role exacerbated by the death of her mother. Hence memory functions more in the unconscious mode, through a process of associative leaps between the inner and the outer landscapes leading to a revisualization of arrested life experiences and perspectives.

In *Jump Kiss* (1999), the 'orbiculate'⁵ aspect of the narrator's recollections can be observed in the constant movement between the narratives and the perspectives. In such a context, the movable plates of the earth's crust become a perfect metaphor for the narrator to freewheel between myths, experiences and perspectives. Therefore, the play is divided into "plates" rather than acts and scenes.

The Best Fancy Dance the Pushmataha Pow Wow's Ever Seen (1997) reveals the intrusion of Columbus' narrative into the lives of the characters. Gertrude's consensus between the spirit and the physical world and Henry's uneasy awareness of the voices of the spirits, are influenced by the act of recollection. Further, every time Jess tries to

perform Columbus' narrative, he draws an unconscious parallel between his own life and that of Columbus. The doubts that assail Columbus on his return journey find a correlation in Jess's childhood memories and his desire to arrive at a location wherein he is able to negotiate his identity as a Native American and deal with the pressures of adolescence. There is an inbuilt fluidity of boundaries which allows him to locate the performance of the narratives within his own sociocultural context.

When *Bull Star* (1982) opens, the conflict revolves around Cree receiving share of the property that the Chief is intending to sell. However, as the play progresses, larger issues of identity are foregrounded. This happens mainly through the personalized reinterpretations of Wovoka's visions that appear at significant points in the play. Hence the structural process is guided both by personal memories as well as relocated cultural stories, all aiding the movement towards a better understanding of the location of the characters. This parallels the process of creation as imagined by Wovoka.⁶ The surrealistic aspect of the play emerges through Lody who lives in a paradigm which transcends the binary categories of the seeable and the non-seeable. She functions as an agent directing the movement towards an understanding of the contradictions that make up the fragmented Native American consciousness. She functions as a foil to the rest of the characters who are bound by the "seen".

In all the instances above, the complex interweaving of myths, stories and perspectives has its roots in memory. However, in a curious twist, Glancy traces certain organized patterns of behaviour/response sourced from her characters' socio-cultural encounters rather than the social and cultural norms defining their responses. These patterns in turn become the defining constructs of the plays. The pattern may be

orbiculate, oriented by a kind of multivalence, and sometimes defined by a dominating metaphor. For example, the house trailer image, which hints at the lack of stability that the women experience in their lives, becomes the operating metaphor for the structure of *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* (1996). The lack of discernible action in the play can be attributed to this metaphor that operates in the background, literally shaping the movement of the play. Similarly, the concept of changing identities is paralleled by the changing of the masks in *Mother of Mosquitos* (1997). The Woman wears one mask after another in an attempt to look beyond the margins dividing the physical and the mystic world. Such a process suggests the changing/shifting identities of the Woman to ensure her survival, especially in a context where she has to contend with the loss of her heritage.⁷ Though the concept of changing seasons organizes the pattern of action in *The Truth Teller* (1992), the reflections of the Indian Woman have limited sourcing in the activities of the season itself. She performs those activities more as an attempt to hold on to the stories of her cultural and mythic past rather than to move in the footsteps of the white man whose map limits his world to the “seeable” and physical.

Such a pattern of representing an “uncontainable” sense of identity accommodates the trickster aspect into the discourse of the play. In Native American oral narratives the “trickster” concept functions as a link between the physical world and the mythical world of spirits. He/she functions as a mystic medium of contact between the human and the sacred, many times bridging the gap between the two. The trickster also functions as the narrator of memory, thus finding a voice for the muted and buried collective history/memory.

The attributes of the trickster, as evinced in the stories and myths include those of transformation into any form, manipulation and survival. And in most of the situations, survival happens through an act of deception. In addition to this, the trickster is often androgynous. Sometimes, he/she can also be conceived of as a truth-teller and as a Native Shaman.⁸ Paul Radin comments that laughter, humour and irony permeate everything that a trickster does (*The Trickster* x). This makes the trickster figure a suitable narrator for a subversive history of colonization.⁹

On close observation, we find that the trickster figure embodies a contradiction, because as much as he/she is in a state of constant flux, the space occupied is liminal.¹⁰ It is from this location that the trickster discourse operates in Glancy's plays. Her plays explore the possibilities for survival within the sociocultural contexts rather than an effort towards self-actualization. Her intention is not to provide a prescriptive solution, but to capture the identity crisis faced by her characters, especially in terms of the changing social and cultural contexts. To accentuate this shift, Glancy tweaks the structure of her plays to present shifting perspectives rather than structural movements. The trickster patterns embedded within the structure provide a discourse that remains open-ended and generates possibilities for multiplicity of meaning and plurality of voices. The trickster concept most effectively captures the fractional experiences, narratives and the perspectives which visualize the contradictions experienced by her characters. Forming the basis for the storying aspect of her plays, the assumption is that once a story is told, it splinters into various other stories for the listeners, which in turn, are infused by their personal voice. The act of storying embeds within itself the idea of an uncontainable sense of identity, thereby creating scope for fluidity in the structural discourse.

Glancy sometimes makes overt references to the trickster figure within the framework of an oral narrative. For example, in a story narrated by Henry in *The Best Fancy Dancer*, the elk was responsible for the vegetation on earth and the Bear was responsible for cranking the sun into the correct position – both the animals capable of transformation as far as the story construct is concerned. In *Weebjob*, the trickster Nanaboozhoo is the only survivor after a fighting among the tribes. With the help of the Muskrat and the turtle, he brings about the creation of earth once again. In *The Truth Teller*, Wenebojo, the trickster, manipulates the process of obtaining maple syrup so that the Indians have to obtain it through hard work. In *The Lesser Wars*, the androgynous aspect of coyote trickster is embodied in the two characters Coytoe and Tecoyo, who function in a complementary manner. Such processes hint at the need to reconstruct native society in a post colonial context, precisely through an allegiance to the idea of “indigenous impulse” giving rise to “culture based on the environment”.

Of far more significance however, is the manner in which Glancy integrates the trickster figure into the structure and the discourse of her plays. Since the concern is more with the voices with which people invest their stories, plot often functions as a non-static construct. This means that the act of storying becomes a dynamic endeavour, working in calibration with the voices that the playwright is trying to capture. One of the major outcomes of integrating the trickster discourse patterns is perceived in the shifting boundaries between genres, forms and worlds. For example, *The Woman Who was a Red Deer* moves between a dialogue and a monologue. There is also an integration of the collaborative aspects in depicting the shift of perspectives through the pattern of questioning. Such a discourse provides for an intrinsic reading of the text at multiple

levels. At one level, it puts women at the centre of experience, while at another, it illustrates generational conflict exacerbated by sociocultural experiences. While the dialogues establish sufficient distance between the Grandmother and the Girl, the monologues ironically reveal that their life experiences might have been similar. The combination of dialogue and monologue breaks the barrier of the stage and allows the Girl to address an imaginative audience in an attempt to record her shifting perspectives on the Ahw'uste.¹¹ Hence while the dialogues are laced with interrogation, irony and sarcasm, the monologues establish a space where the Girl attempts to confront the validity of the myth called Ahw'uste. The effort to “combine the overlapping realities of myth, imagination, and memory with spaces for silences” (4) brings out the crucial point of difference between the Grandmother and the Girl. While the Grandmother confesses that her initial subscription to the Ahw'uste was more out of a sense of survival, the Girl perceives them as an abstraction that finds limited currency in the context of her sociocultural location. The monologue creates the necessary disconnectedness to consider the shift in conception of the Ahw'uste from a contextual perspective. This is especially significant in a context where natives have lost their languages and their communities. The monologue becomes a metaphor for their life in the sense that continuous communication with their own people as well as others becomes a difficult task. Such blurring of boundaries between dialogue and monologue also allows the Girl to selectively recollect only those excerpts of the “frustrating” conversations which would permit her to connect the everyday realities with the sacred and the spiritual. Moreover, there is a clear attempt to bring into relief the mythical world of the Grandmother and the visible world of the Girl, thereby offering the thesis that the marginalised status of the

characters can be negotiated through a compassionate acceptance of the contradictions that make up their sense of identity.

The “interdisciplinary world that walks the border between script and poem” (190) creates the necessary disconnectedness for *Halfact*. Such a sense of disconnectedness mirrors the predicament of the Natives who have been distanced from their culture and language. In keeping with the oral narrative traditions which integrate dialogue and narration, the structure of the play moves between verse and prose. For example, the Narrator says: “Coyote Girl’s Father and Brother carry Coyote Girl’s Mother from the kitchen. They place her in the backyard on a board between two chairs. See her from the corner of your eye while you watch Coyote Girl grieve” (196). While directing us to observe the attitude of grief displayed by the Coyote Girl, the point of view established by the narrator integrates the Mother and the Coyote Girl. This exhortation from the Narrator lends the aspect of mourning to the lines of the Coyote Girl. She says: “Ring the church bellies/My arms agree/I’m proud owlie outta the tree” (196). Here, the intrusion of the jarring comic verse disrupts the flow of the text, allowing a necessary disconnectedness to enter the meaning. This disconnectedness is captured in the movement of the Coyote Girl from a location of mourning to a location of resignation. In the process, the focus shifts to the provocative “unsaid” implicit in the process of the transformation of the Coyote Girl into a Woman, with all the accompanying responsibilities. The significance of the phrase “proud owlie outta the tree” appears later, when the Coyote Girl equates her mother’s death to the killing of an owl. She says, “Mother was sick in bed. Outside an owl hooted in a tree. Father went out and shot the owl. Now Mother’s dead of a gunshot wound in her chest” (197).

Through an amalgam of narrative, poetry and the comic, a jarring interlude is created within the narrative discourse, which permits the intrusion of violence into the processes of transformation of roles. By extension, the Coyote Girl's processes of making the connection with the spirit world are arbitrary and are often accompanied by a discordant note of violence.

In some plays, it can be observed that a necessary disconnectedness is engendered through the "journal" element which organizes the play in terms of perspectives rather than any discernible sense of action. With reference to *Jumpkiss*, Glancy says that her attempts had been to "enclose different voices and genres" (87). In such a context, the necessary disconnectedness is created by the journal element itself characterized by a simplistic, general, yet a sudden impact on the movement of the narrative. The journal element opens up the dramatic space for foregrounding the voice of the character/narrator. The woman who is narrating her visit to China, or the narrator in *Jumpkiss* emerge as empowered individuals who can perceive points of interconnection between the apparent differences in culture and traditions.

In an attempt to make connections with the spiritual aspect of life, Glancy's plays blur the boundaries between the physical and the metaphysical worlds mainly through the stories, myths and narratives. For example in *The Truth Teller*, connections with the mythical world are established through stories which are sometimes integrated as surrealistic dream sequences or dance performances. The story of the land, narrated in the second section of the play, blurs the boundaries between the real and the mythical worlds. In this version of the story, the land decides to move out of its own volition after a thunderstorm. The movement of land has the potential of a disaster for the Indian Woman

who has already equated land with memories and culture. However, in yet another gesture of reorientation, the musician in the bear mask beats the drum and directs the Indian Man to a place for fishing, giving him a hint that he can “fish” a name for the baby in his dreams. Just like how the bears had previously functioned as parental figures, directing him towards his Grandmother, the idea of bear functions as a connection to the mythical world. The Indian Man is finally able to arrive at a name for the baby by tapping his unconscious self and locating a name. It can also be considered that the act of ‘arriving’ at a name approximates to resisting the influence of the colonizers, rather than a gesture of reconciliation or assimilation because of the very processes involved in the act of naming. In spite of his mixed blood status and his continued association with the White colonizers, the Man in the play chooses to arrive at a name for his yet-to-be-born baby through the process of dreaming. While the transition into the mystical world through dance and song indicates the co-existence of the physical world and the mystical, there is an indication that the borderlines are being rapidly decimated due to cultural upheaval. After the act of naming the child as ‘truth teller’ – “an individual who is able to walk in both the worlds”, there are indications that the Indian Man decided to leave, just like how a part of the land decides to leave in the story narrated by him. The significance of such an act lies in the assumption of an implicit connection and identification with land which is conceived of as a holistic construct composed of memories and culture.

The Sum of Winter is conceived as a “village in a fog that clears now and then so the plot is visible” (84). The metaphor of a village in a fog accurately corresponds to the thin plot of the play which permits movement between physical and conceptual realms of action. Therefore the terminology that Glancy uses to talk about her idea of the structure

also adopts a similar pattern of correlating the components of the structure with the abstract. For example she says: “The piece explores how to cross the indirectness of an abstract field of snow by certain variations in dialogue” (85). By extension, the play contains the elements of surrealism and realism, punctuated by the desire of the dramatist to see “how far a story can be stretched and still remain a story with a recognizable plot, conflict/crisis, and character development” (84). By locating the play in the area “over the rim of the world” for her audience, Glancy enables a processual movement between the fluid margins of the ‘visible’ and the ‘invisible’ landscape.

The voice of the Spirits, who function in the spirit realm, establishes a parallel narrative about the significance of the Beluga’s actions. The perspectives which they establish for the audience take into account the changed sociocultural context, which envisions the Beluga as a vehicle for the negotiation of a contradictory sense of identity. The following lines are an example for this:

SPIRITS. The beluga makes leap out of the water – his jumps are an attempt to return to the land.

DIESEL. I hear the beluga’s cries of anger in the roar of my new snowmobile. (sic) (87)

The Beluga and Diesel are defined by the frustration that they experience. The Beluga is not able to return to land and Diesel would soon have to give up his new snowmobile because of the debt he has run up. Rather than resolution, this aspect of intertwining the spirit realm and the real life serves to illustrate the not so hard and fast boundaries between the two worlds. There is a clear indication that this is a play of possibilities which works precisely through the blurring of boundaries between the world

of spirits and the world of characters. While this is indicated for the most part through dialogue, Glancy also mentions in the foreword: “There also is the possibility for dance, interpreting the story of the Beluga, the solar storms, northern lights, the ghosts of the early explorers, etc” (85). As a result, the structure of the play functions as an open-ended construct facilitating the integration of various voices. While probing the possible causes for juvenile delinquency, it permits a discussion of the metaphysical implications of relationships against a background of received knowledge of conscious/unconscious memories which are represented through the stories of the early Arctic explorers. The Spirits push the play into the realm of the spiritual as they serve to explore the parallels between the Beluga and the characters in the play. The story of the Beluga’s repeated attempts to reach the land serves to highlight the identity crisis faced by the characters amidst a fragmented sense of life. This is obvious in the two versions of the Beluga’s story as narrated by the Spirits. The first version of the story happens in the introductory part of the play, in the context of Eugene’s boarding school experiences. The Spirits say:

The walrus and the caribou wanted more room. They tricked the
beluga. They tied him up saying it was a game. They dragged him
to the water, cut off his arms and legs and pushed him in the sea.
He splatted like an old ship heavy with ice. He sank into the water.
The beluga makes leaps out of the water – his jumps are an attempt
to return to the land. (87)

The Spirits are comparing Eugene’s predicament to that of the Beluga in the story. Just like the Beluga, Eugene had been left immobile by the lack of access to his language and culture in a boarding school context. However, towards the end of the play, the

Beluga attains the status of a cultural emblem. In yet another narration of the story, the Spirits say:

At one time the Beluga had arms and legs – The walrus and the
caribou tied him up saying it was a game. They pulled him to the
water and pushed him in the sea. He leaps from the water
attempting to return to land. The seafarers who drowned hold onto
him. We call the Beluga, *ghost hauler*. (sic) (103)

The most obvious difference between the two versions is the change of tense, implying that the story of the Beluga is now a story in motion. Further, the Beluga, which mirrored Eugene's dissociated consciousness, now emerges as a symbol of survival. In fact, the Spirits describe it as a *ghost hauler* – acting as a hope for survival for seafarers like Eugene, Mora and Diesel. The setting of the play is aptly “the rim of the world”, a vantage point from where both the “visible” and the “invisible” worlds can be accessed. By extension, the patterns of survival become a recurring trope in the structure of the play. The three characters emerge as survivors of their situations, as illustrated by the fractional experiences of their life. The conclusion of the play is signalled by Eugene's declaration: “It's about owning up to who we are. Tattered – half frozen, a fraction of what we should be” (103).

Another noticeable aspect of the trickster discourse is the non-linearity of structural action. When Glancy describes the script as a “character which the story enters” (*Writings* 28), the focus shifts to the manner in which the story is shaped by the character. For instance, at the beginning of *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* (1996), the plot functions as a “thin line” on which the stories of Berta, Oscar and Jelly

hang in isolation. The conversations appear dissociated with no logical progression in the dialogue. Their effort is at transcending the gap between the visible, limited world and moving to the realm of stories, ideas and harmony. The triad like nature of the play is sourced in the isolated efforts of the women to relocate their conception of identity in the realities of their everyday life. Their conversations approach the issue of identity from three different locations which are defined by the images that dominate their act of recollection.

Jump Kiss works as a play of possibilities, with an open-ended structure facilitating the “*genre-tive* blend of the fictive and nonfictive” (87). As Glancy describes, the play is a “search for definition of self fragmented by the act of memory, buckling events, pushing one plate under another. Disordering the landscape in other words” (87). Hence “the play rides upon plates like the earth’s crust” (87) characterized by sudden shifts in perspectives. The sections which are titled or sometimes simply named “Fragments” capture the significant memories and experiences of the narrator which reveal the contradictions which the narrator has to negotiate. Moreover, since the play is a “recovery of events and experiences and relationships for the purpose of understanding what has passed” (87), the implication is that it can be read or performed in any order.

To create an adequate platform for the working of this “journal piece”, the structure of the play had to accommodate parallels between received knowledge and personalized life experiences, in addition to providing for the play of voices. This is achieved by shifting the focus from recollection and retrospective narration, to a living experience that transcends time and the limits imposed by particularity of the memories sourced in the socio-cultural contexts of the narrator. The memories of the scars obtained

through an accident at the old grocer's, the recollections of cows being taken to the slaughter-house, and dream of the brother's throat being slit at the barber shop create an impression of the initial disorientation that is needed to proceed to a liminal stage of consciousness. From such a location, the spiritual ambiguity of the narrator forms the undercurrent for the acts of recollection that are recorded in every plate.

Though the author states that the plates could be moved in any order in her working notes, there also seems to be a possibility of moving the sections within as well as across the plates. The play itself can be conceived of as an organic construct, constantly providing scope for interpretations and reinterpretations. Originally conceived as a one voice piece, three additional voices were included in 2001. The play had seven voices, including those of the husband and the son with the inclusion of other elements like family photo slides (establishing an autobiographical connection) and musical instruments. Inclusion of new voices meant inclusion of new pieces in the plates. This included a section titled "Mixed Heritage" that had the voice of the Father as a narrator, and a "Fragment" with the Husband's voice. A poem (Without Title) and a Buffalo Song¹² were also added. Though Glancy doesn't provide reasons for the inclusion of additional voices and sections, there is a clear attempt at creating a blueprint for an inclusive idea of performance where the performers bring in their personalized voices to the play. She says in her production notes:

As we talked about the play, everyone involved wanted to tell their own stories. At the discussion with the audience following the Autry performance – which centered around how the play worked for them – the

same thing happened. The stories in *Jump Kiss* involved everyone in their own stories, and those stories caused other stories – (208)

By establishing a metaphoric connection between the structural division of the play and the plates of the earth's crust, authorial control is established through the conception of the play rather than the performance. This ensures that the structure functions as a metaphor referent for the representation of the shifting sense of identity as perceived within each section of the play.

In keeping with the idea of the trickster discourse and its implications on the staging of the variants, the play of imagery and metaphors in Glancy's plays is often tensional in nature. This facilitates the shifting contexts and meanings in her plays. The imagery often approximates to Spivak's concept of "catachresis" – a tactical maneuver that involves wrenching particular images and concepts out of their place within a particular narrative and using them to open up new areas of meaning. In *The Post-Colonial Critic* (1990), Spivak uses the word catachresis to refer to a metaphor without an adequate literal referent (154). Interestingly, in Glancy's plays, metaphors sometime function contextually without the presence of a literal referent, as evidenced in the following example from *Halfact*. While associating her mother with the owl, two events have been correlated with the common image of an owl, a correspondence that is further bolstered when the act of shooting establishes causal connection between the mother's death and the owl being shot. This, by default also lends credence to the assumption of the maternal role by the Coyote Girl as she describes herself as a "proud owlie outta the tree" (196). Hence the process of identifying the mother with the owl in the tree works more in terms of a catachresis. The necessary tension is generated through the rapidly

shifting contexts of the Coyote Girl's life wherein responsibilities are thrust upon her. Similar is the case with the pine doll image which extends into a defining metaphor for the Coyote Girl. In the cultural traditions of Native American life, playing with pine dolls prepares girls for the domestic responsibilities in future life. At the beginning, the narrator tells us that the Coyote Girl is making a pine doll out of pine needles and traces its origin to the cemetery, hinting at an ironic revelation that she may have to assume domestic responsibilities soon. At a later point in the play, the narrator describes the Coyote Girl's room where, amidst the funeral rubble, there are a row of pine cones on her dresser – a reminder of her disintegrated childhood and her acquired identity as the woman of the house. It is only when she wears her space helmet at the end of the play, can she dance with the ghost of her pine needle doll, which by now approximates to her lost childhood. Here we find the pine needle doll functioning not as a vehicle carrying a singularity of meaning. It functions in the mode of "catachresis" whereby Glancy uses the metaphor to record the constantly shifting meanings based on the location of the Coyote Girl, thereby suggesting that the metaphor itself is tensional in nature.

The tensional aspect of the discourse is also shaped by the disparate comparisons by the narrator, which remind us that we are looking at jagged edges between two worlds. For example, in the statement, "Inside the porch where the sky doesn't reach, thoughts are tucked like hair into the old leather flight-cap she wears now" (198), an implicit connection is assumed between the silence of the Coyote Girl and her new role which ensures her silence. While the metaphor implicit in "porch where the sky doesn't reach" reminds us that much of the play is happening in the subconscious realm of the Coyote Girl, "thoughts are tucked like hair into the old leather flight cap" reveals that the Coyote

Girl is resigned to such a transformation which denies her individuality, but permits her flight into the mythical world. Such disparate comparisons open possibilities for a relocation of the owl image in her mother. By extension, there are also possibilities for transformation of roles not just from Coyote Girl to Coyote Woman, but also to the Coyote Boy, as we are left with the impression that Coyote Boy could just be a literal manifestation of the “other” of the Coyote Girl. In another instance of a disparate comparison, the Coyote Girl says: “I hear my Father pounding the barn roof. It sounds like my Brother biting into an apple” (193). In this comparison, the jagged space between the Father and the Coyote Boy is opened for the location of the Coyote Girl vis-à-vis her father and brother. Ironically, her voice is silent. The reason for this silence is substantiated in the following statement: “Mother I take your apron and grease the bread pans. The voice of a woman is a foreign object. It feels like silence in my mouth” (198).

Once the role transformation happens, the Coyote Girl is also silenced. In a rather manipulative gesture, disparate comparisons aid in the creation of a third space facilitating what Stephen Hawley would call the aim of the trickster in literary discourse – enticing the steps into metaphor (1). In this case, the Coyote Girl is able to arrive at a metaphor that best describes her location amidst the triad of characters – she has been silenced just like the pine doll that she had buried earlier.

In *The Truth Teller*, maps function in a similar manner. In the post-colonial discourse, maps often emerge as symbols signifying mastery and control not just over a territory, but over its attendant culture as well. While objectifying the process of discovery maps also act as agents signifying the influence of acquired ideology on an unknown. Further, the act of renaming spaces indicates a process of cultural

superscription, which in many instances, creates multiple and sometimes conflicting accretions. Therefore maps acquire political significance because they narrate stories of colonialism and imperialism as perceived by the colonizer. From this, it can be seen that the act of naming, which appears to be a crucial issue in *The Truth Teller*, assumes a sociocultural significance. While locating the baby against a cultural horizon, it will also include the influences of the Indian Man and the Indian Woman, who become integral in the act of “observing”.

In the play, the Indian Woman resists the idea of maps because they challenge her notion of the indivisibility of the mythical and the real world. It is precisely this aspect of maps that troubles the Indian Woman who wonders how the whites operate with maps and by extension without the attendant stories which guide the life of the community. She asks: “What drives them up the river to make marks of land on their map? To set up villages behind the walls?” (262)

The idea of demarcating boundaries poses a problem for the Indian Woman because it opposes the idea of mobility. Similarly, stories function as carriers of messages from the ancients. They aid in survival through the tensional aspect of their narratives and cannot be confined to a book. In the particular case of the Indian Woman, stories help her during her husband’s absence, as she narrates them to herself. It is precisely the mobility of stories, typified by the comparison to a canoe, which functions as an agent of healing. The Indian Woman declares, “Our stories carry us like a canoe. That’s what stories do” (259).

At a larger level, while the maps clearly relegate the world into a seeable construct defined by limits, the absence of stories denies the presence of mythic world.

The absence of stories and the presence of maps represent an effort to break the connection between man and nature. While for the whites, maps function as vehicles which familiarize the unfamiliar, even if it involves a denial of the history connected to the land and renaming it according to convenience, the maps make the familiar remote and inaccessible for people like the Indian Man and Woman.

The bear functions as a dominant transformative image that the Indian Man has retained from his significant childhood memories. In Native American myths, the bear is a powerful figure associated with healing. By the virtue of its ability to hibernate, it functions as a symbol of renewal and seasonal change. The Cherokee belief holds that the bears are actually humans and possess the ability to speak. Further, the physical attributes of the bear lend credence to the conception of the bear as a brother, a kindred spirit and a teacher, thereby enabling the transformation of humans into bears, as illustrated in the following recollection of the Indian Man:

When I was a boy my mother and father died within two days of each other. My father died of a hunting accident. My mother died in childbirth. I went into the woods. I didn't want to live. I had nothing but water for seven days, and a man and woman came to me. They said your grandmother is crying for you. What are you doing here? They asked. Then they changed into bears and walked away. (259)

While this represents a personalized recollection focusing on the message that he had to return to his grandmother, the whole episode of retiring to the forest reinforces the idea of hibernation and renewal. The bears perform an additional role of cultural healers,

especially since they initiate the ensuing dream in which the Indian Man sees a visual representation of the growing colonial influence. He sees a drum painted red and blue signifying the land of the rising sun and the land of darkness. He also sees an approaching white storm and his song is an entreaty to the storm to go away. What we sense in the process of this narrative is not just a recollection of a childhood memory shaping the present perspective, but also the resignation of the Indian Man and Woman to the fact that the inscribed colonial influence is a reality that they have to survive. Very significantly, the bears point the way towards cultural survival, by redirecting the Indian Man to his grandmother.

In the *Mother of Mosquitos*, the complex interplay of images and their associated significance are in a state of flux. An ordinary mosquito at the beginning of the play acquires the status of a Mother Mosquito towards the end. This process happens through the associative mode in which the images are linked to each other in terms of their implications. The dialogue aids this process by working at the level of association rather than a linear progression of thought. This accounts for the fragmented nature of the exchanges which enable the dynamic aspect of the images through the play. For example, at the opening of the play, the dialogue between the Woman and the Chorus seems to be fragmented. After swatting the mosquito, the Woman asks: ‘Why mosquito fly near us?’ (275). The response of the Chorus starts as a biological reasoning but ends by making an association that demands for a suspension of reality. The Chorus says: “She drinks blood. Her life’s in our blood. Red drops come to our arm like leaves” (275). The comparison of red blood drops to leaves initiates the reference to the underwater driftwood forests. The underwater forest is first established by the Chorus as the source of dreams but the Forest

disputes its presence through its rhetorical questions, implying that the existence of the forest is determined by a belief.

The Forest, in tandem with the Chorus, functions as a medium blurring the boundaries between the world of the woman and the world of Nature. Instead of simply commenting on the action, the Chorus exhorts the woman to make the connections between the images and metaphors. Therefore the fragmented exchanges, which work more at the level of references and associations, enable the movement of the play in terms of images within the particularized and general experiences of the woman. Though the play happens to be an instance of locating the idea of survival specifically through the strategy of using masks, the element of transformation is visible in the tensional aspect of the masks, implying that identity is indeed a fluid construct.

In *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer*, by talking in terms of concretized abstractions, the Grandmother implies that it is for the Girl to make sense of the tensional construct of the Ahwu'ste. In her visualizations, the deer could have wings if one imagined and could sometimes also become two legged with the remaining two hidden in her deer dress. The implication is that the spirit deer and the deer dress are tensional constructs that permit a specific and particularized interpretation depending on the location of the characters. The location of the characters in turn, is defined by their degree of belief in the myth itself.

GIRL. Your deer dress is the way you felt when you saw the deer?

GRANDMOTHER. When I saw the Ahw'uste, yes. My deer dress is the way I felt, transformed by the power of ceremony. The idea of it in the forest of my head. (14)

The Girl considers the deer dress to be an avenue for escape from the realities of life. However, by the end of the play, she understands that her deer dress is shaped by personalized beliefs rather than tangible constructs. For the grandmother, an animal like deer becomes an abstract spiritual construct approximating to the Ahw'uste. A red deer dress is transformed by the power of ceremony into an aspect of her identity. After the recovery of the conversations that she had with the Grandmother, the Girl is able to relocate the myth within her own sociocultural framework. For her, the tangible construct of the deer dress becomes an intangible construct of a "dress of words" (18). Rather than working on the basis of acts and scenes, the dialogues and the monologues about these two images create the necessary tension for appropriating the story of Ahw'uste.

Similarly, *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* is punctuated by tensional images sourced from significant childhood experiences and cultural myths. For example, Oscar visualizes her mother as a wren and hence her conversations are punctuated with references to birds. She says that her mother made a nest from her anger and discontent. Since she is also engaged in finding points of contact between life experiences and cultural myths, she pictures herself as a welder and her operating metaphor is a blowtorch used for welding. Similarly, Berta's memories are dominated by the image of a house trailer, which becomes the operating metaphor for the stories that she narrates. The migratory aspect of the house trailer is captured in the various versions of the stories that she narrates, or as she puts it, "stories of versions", since the versions are the same but the narrative patterns differ. Therefore the stories function as points of integration for her. For Jelly, the birchbark canoe functions as an operating metaphor since her memories are influenced by the childhood image of a waterlogged boat which implies the idea of

floating. In her case, she is floating between the various implications of her identity as a daughter and a lover.

At the conclusion of the play, the women address each other in terms of their images which implies that they have acknowledged the relative impact of the images which are themselves in a state of “eternal tease” as far as their implications are concerned, thereby subscribing to the metaphor of a house trailer. In fact Glancy states that the fourth character in the play is the house trailer itself and had originally conceived its presence through a developing multimedia trailer during the performance. However, a semblance of it was captured by putting wheels on a birdhouse and using a light to shadow it on the wall (206). The need for integration is made obvious by the house trailer functioning as a construct for negotiating their dissociation between the visible and the invisible worlds. Hence, in a gesture symptomatic of Spivak’s catachresis, the image of the house trailer is wrenched out of its common everyday signification and is instead employed to create a foundation for the narratives of rootlessness and migration. In that sense, the house trailer in fact can approximate to the fourth character in the play whose silence preponderates and directs the acts of recollection that the women engage in.

In *Jump Kiss*, the movement in the play happens through the associations of memories and images within a web like reconstruction and revisualization of events, initiated by the first act of snuffing out the life of the Spider. An illustration of this is the Vacation Bible School experience, which shapes much of the narrator’s idea of Christianity. In “Glow-Ree” it is stated that Christ died for the sake of the people. It is obvious that this aspect of Christianity is received knowledge that turns out to be in conflict with Native American modes of understanding the concept of sacrifice. The same

idea reappears as a fragment in Plate 3, when Christ's act of crucifixion is interpreted not just as an act of glory, but as a mode of penitence. It is through an act of "jump kiss" that Christ is able to ascend the heaven. In a literal transfer of the imagery associated with crucifixion, the narrator suggests that forgiveness may hold the key to a better understanding of Christ and his sacrifice, and its location in the everyday life of individuals. She says:

I needed it so. Forgiveness.

But you know Christ doesn't care who you are or what you've done. He opens you like a pear. Takes His peering knife right down to the core. It doesn't hurt. Does a pear feel pain? Have you ever heard one cry out as you bit into it? (114)

A space is created for the idea of forgiveness to operate only when the narrator is able to confront the painful experiences of the past. Within the context of the play, the knife has already been established as a symbol of violence and bloodshed against silent victims. As a result, the images have a tensional aspect with reference to the experiences from which they are sourced.

Another instance of such tensional aspect of an image appears in the section "The Stockyards". The narrator first narrates a general experience of seeing cows being led to the slaughter house. Intertwined with this narrative is the particular experience at the barbershop, which is patterned after a dream sequence. The common image that the narrator retains from both the experiences is the act of slaughter. "Slaughter" with its accompanying implications of violence and bloodshed, also breaks the sacred Native American beliefs concerning the harmony with the environment. "Hunting", as

interpreted in the Native American context, was an act necessary for the survival of a community, and hence was considered to be a ritual. However the narrator is able to morph the implication of 'hunting' onto 'slaughter' due to her changed sociocultural context. 'Slaughter' has replaced 'hunting', not just as a way of survival, but as a means of supporting the economic requirements of the family. She is also able to assign a ritual aspect to the act of killing, especially when she raises it to the level of a metaphor. She says: "It was later, though, I had to kill myself before I could go on to life. A ritual I had to do" (110).

In *The Sum of the Winter*, the images and the metaphors serve to highlight the tension in the relationships between Eugene, Mora and Diesel. For example the memories of his wife that Eugene holds on to (in the form of her dresses) become the bone of contention between him and Mora. In a very symbolic move, Mora gives Diesel a box containing the clothes of his silent mother, which she describes as "wings for your journey" (99). The metaphor used here is associative, because the clothes in the box are representative of Eugene's first wife. Hence the wings for Diesel's journey are these clothes since he holds on to the memories of his mother and refuses to accept Mora in her place. Even the story of the Beluga functions as a tensional metaphor which parallels the frustration of the characters. The play ends on a highly imagistic note with correlation being established between memories, stories, and the voice of the Beluga which has been pushed into the cold sea, just like how the characters have been pushed into life.

In *The Collector of a Three-Cornered Stamp*, images and metaphors function in a tensional association with memory. In the first section, a woman vicariously relives the horrors of the Vietnam War through the memories of her husband. A complex association

between the memories and the desire for escape result in the correlation of the postage stamp with the helicopter wing. The images are sourced in the significant experiences of the husband while flying a helicopter with the instrument flight. In the second section, the memories of an old friend “happen” against the background of post cards being sent from different places. Here, the postage stamp is conceived of as an animal or a bird because the most significant memory that the narrator retains of her friend is her philosophy that people have animal counterparts – an idea that bridges the gap between the world of humans and the larger physical world and moves the narrator into the world of empathy. In the third section, the postage stamp functions as a unit of creation as conceived by the Spirit. In a retelling of the story of human creation, the Spirit creates the postage stamp in its own image, but as it kept dividing, complications ensured that the creation was separated from the creator. The narrator says:

After a while the stamps became so complicated they became a lot of separate things (sic). So at that point the unifier was the separator. It started thinking for itself. It decided to think it was spirit. The stamp had rebelled. It got a big head looking at everything it had done. (31)

The image of the postage stamp, in combination with the story of its separation, functions like an allegory, building up on the memories recollected in the previous sections and arriving at the conception of the three-cornered postage stamp as the residual image. This image functions as the required objective correlative for the narrator to try and arrive at an explanation for her own separation from the spiritual realm of life, through a process of recollection, reliving and consolidation. Such a process enables Glancy to conceive of the play itself as a collector of a three-cornered stamp, lending it a

voice that speaks from realms of a fragmented sense of identity. As she tries to find scope for connection between the three distinct voices of the narrator in the play, the three-cornered postage stamp literally functions as an agent stamping memories onto the consciousness of the narrator.

While Glancy's characters delve into a "usable past" in search of survival and healing, and engage with metaphors and symbols whose dynamic aspect parallels their "uncontainable" sense of identity, the patterns of such processes are significantly impacted by the sense of irony, which in turn, renders the narrative discourse tensional. Such patterns also enable the characters to engender their own modes of resistance to their sociocultural ambivalences, thereby illustrating that their reach for tradition and authority functions mostly in an ironical context, often facilitating a pattern of contradictions.¹³

For example in *Halfact*, the statements of the intrusive narrator embody the pattern of contradiction. While his questions and rhetorical statements enhance the impression that the play is happening in the subconscious realm of the Coyote Girl, they also serve to highlight the contradictions imposed by the changing realities of her life. For example, as soon as the Coyote Boy compares his mother's death to an act of closure, the Narrator intervenes with a rhetorical question: "Isn't that life, The split she walked?" (197) thereby raising the individual experience to the level of an operating trope of life in general. The play represents a motion of "uncontainable identities" which runs parallel to the assumption of multiple identities by the trickster during the course of a narrative. While the contradictory aspect of the trickster is embodied both in the discourse patterns and the language, the narrator, by playing the role of an interlocutor between the audience

and the text, directs the focus onto the contradictory sense of identity that the Coyote Girl experiences.

In *The Truth Teller*, the pattern of contradiction starts from the title of the play which subscribes to a defining aspect of the trickster – that of telling the truth. Though it is the Man's responsibility to 'dream' a name, he happens to be a Native American of mixed descent, who guides the whites across the uncertain terrains of the Native American territories – an act which the Indian Woman does not approve of. However, in a seeming attempt to negotiate the demands of both the worlds, the Indian Man names the new born baby as "truth teller" – a person who can walk between the margins of Native life and Western idea of civilization. Set in Circa 1800, the play captures active resistance to the idea of colonization through the patterns of contradiction in the narrative discourse of the play. The constant questioning by the Indian Woman, while simultaneously being engaged in activities specific to the season indicates that she is in a tensional balance with the cultural fragmentation that she is experiencing. Such interrogative modes of dialogue capture some of the peripatetic moments that are instrumental in shaping the responses of the characters. For example, the story of Wenebojo the trickster who made the process of obtaining maple sugar syrup more difficult for the Natives seems to serve as a justification for Indian woman's constant engagement with work as she broods on the metaphysical implications of naming of her baby. However she senses the virtual upheaval of the cultural aspects of life in the contraptions and the dreams of the whites. The resultant tension she experiences manifests in her perpetual questioning of her husband's choice of occupation. Objects like the steel traps and leg bands are reminders

of the fact that her husband has already been labeled as a “half-breed traitor” by the village elders and hence her doubts about his ability to dream a name for her baby.

Mother of Mosquitos works at a surreal level, establishing an assumed contact between the Indian Woman and the natural world. The play is set in “a village of ice in the far north of imagination” (274) which implies that a freewheeling between the physical and the mythical world and making radical connections between the both is possible. The four characters – Mosquito, Woman, Chorus and The Forest – aid the structural movement of the play as they attempt to find points of contact between images and meanings. The structure of the play revolves around the act of correlating the buzzing of a mosquito in the real world to the presence of leaves in a mythical underwater forest made of driftwood. This forest exists only in dreams and visions ¹⁴. Hence the woman has to move towards a holistic connection between nature and myths, visions and dreams. Through a process of intense correlation the play tries to depict a literal representation of the contradictory perspectives of the Woman. The remaining characters – the Forest and the Chorus as well as the masks (fish, seal-skin, dream) aid the woman in assuming the various roles as she proceeds on what seems to be a vision quest. As she moves, the masks aid her in assuming the identity required for that particular dimension of the quest, thus having an intrusive presence on the narrative and a strong impact on the consciousness of the Woman. For example, when she steps into the fish mask, she declares, “I become one with the mask” (276). The impact of this statement appears in the following lines in which she believes that she has been liberated from her identity as a woman with its associated pain of child-birth and tattoos. She says, “Sweet Mask. No childbirth pains. No tattooing-needle in my face. No soot-black thread drawn through my

cheeks” (276). More importantly, she is apparently safe from the bites of the mosquito because her domicile is now underwater. But the contradiction arises when she realizes that this identity does not protect her from a fish-spear. Therefore a need arises for her to step into the seal-skin tunic which would permit her to live both on land and water, implying a negotiation of the contradictory sense of identity.

Glancy does not give directions as to when exactly the woman uses the mosquito or dreams mask, leaving it possible for an open-ended use of these masks. However, a reading of the text would reveal that the woman might probably assume the dream mask, when the Forest tells her about the stories of the underwater forest from where the driftwood comes. This would not make sense to her in the real world, but such a possibility exists in the world of dreams. When the Chorus says, “We know things now. These dreams are our masks” she responds, “I dream-dance in a seal-skin tunic” (279). This prompts the question as to what would happen without the dreams. The implicit assumption in the play is that the driftwood in the underwater forest is the source of the dreams. But the woman is not able to find the underwater forest. At this point the Forest functions as a character and disputes its presence. It has a different idea about leaves – they are subject to decay according to the changing seasons. The implication is that the leaves can also assume and change in colour before being completely annihilated, just like how the woman can change her masks. There is a parallel between the journey of the leaves and the journey of the woman. From this perspective, the masks function as vehicles carrying beliefs and stories. In a ritualistic context, masks aid the ritual performer in changing his/her physical form to enter the world of the spirit in a way analogous to shaman’s magical transformation. Theoretically, it is only in the village of

ice, far away from vegetation, that she can stay away from the mosquitoes. In an ironical twist, her hope in this belief is shattered by her abrupt realization that the catalyst to this whole movement, the driftwood, is now ordered only through catalogue, because of which she has lost her connection with the mythical world. Hence the idea of the driftwood becomes an elusive construct for the Woman.

In *One Horse*, Glancy looks at the cultural institution of Pow Wow from an ironical perspective. The original idea behind the Pow Wow is the identification of Native Americans as people with a common heritage rather than a community divided by individualized orientation of tribes. In that sense, it becomes a space for integration and hence the social aspect of the Pow Wow contributes toward the preservation of a generational sense of identity. However, Glancy structures her play as a modernized Pow Wow broadcast, in which the audience listens to the proceedings, thereby restricting the scope for active involvement. The source is an actual radio broadcast heard by the dramatist while traveling across Northern Wisconsin on July 19, 1992. Though removed from the actual context of the ceremony, the recollection and the narrative awaken an ironical awareness of the connection with the sacred and a generational history of the community.

In *The Woman Who was a Red Deer*, the irony in the discourse is patterned after two kinds of action motifs. They are the grandmother's fluid accounts of the sightings and significance of the Ahwu'ste, and the increasingly personalized interpretations of the red deer dress which amounts to conscious and localized interpretations of the deer and the dress. Hence, both the narrative strands are in a state of flux. For example, the grandmother first locates the Ahw'uste in Deer Creek and later in the Asuwosg precinct.

In the first instance, she could see only the head of the deer, but later it becomes a four legged deer with wings wearing the red deer dress. For the Grandmother, the deer dress is the way she feels, “transformed by the power of ceremony” (14) while the Girl’s deer dress is composed of words. Hence, a general myth progressively transformed into a personalized recollection with metaphysical implications, becomes the source of survival for the Grandmother with an ironical implication that her efforts at integrating the physical and the mythical worlds may sometimes fall short of her expectations. She acknowledges that the “damned spirits” didn’t always help her out during her rough times. This brings out the contrast between the Girl and the Grandmother because the Girl has been conditioned to see her world in categories of visible and mythical. The irony also evolves from the fact that the Grandmother consciously refuses to share information with the Girl, thereby not living up to her role of being a nodal point in sharing, instructing and moulding. However, since survival seems to be contingent on the process of pulling a mythical belief into her everyday life, the Girl has to negotiate the categories, for which she has to break the boundaries between the visible and the mythical world. In other words, she has to live with the contradictions that her cultural identity imposes upon her. The Girl’s declaration of sewing her own deer dress is illustrative of such an effort – of living with the contradictions. As Christy Stanlake puts it, “the girl’s task is not to simulate her grandmother’s traditions of the Ahw’uste but to discover how to embrace “the pleasure of contradictions” within her own postindian identity” (188).

In *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, the titled sections establish ironic context for the reflections of the women. The disconnectedness of their families and the

limits imposed by the visible world creates the disconnect in their discourse. This disconnect captures the sense of contradiction that the women experience in their encounters with the world of relationships and economics. The first section is titled “The Three Women Are Nearing the Last Days in Their Studio Because We Can’t Pay the Rent.” The sudden shift from an objective third person to a collective first person as illustrated by the use of the term “We” indicates that the women are now taking over the narrative structure of the play. The life situation of being unable to pay the rent is raised to a metaphysical location from where the women are able to negotiate their “uncontainable” sense of identity. While the idea of movement is reinforced by the stories and narratives of the women, the house trailer image starts functioning as a defining construct of the play as evinced in the following exchange between the women:

BERTA. He made the house trailer from a dream.

I’m sending off my dream in a grant proposal.

Leaving it for the mailman.

OSCAR. A trailer can’t go anywhere on its own, that’s my first objection.

(23)

The irony is built into the idea that though the defining metaphor has the integrated aspect of mobility, it cannot function in the absence of control. In this case, control is established by the characters who recollect events from the past, which, in turn, serve to highlight the tensional aspect of the identities they have assumed.

The title “In the Cemetery at Oscar’s Father’s Funeral” hints at the irony of being in the presence of an “absent father”. The women know that it is the power of belief that ensures the presence/absence of people in their lives. For example, since Oscar has

already correlated her mother with a bird, she is working on the 'Wren Series' and ensures that her blowtorch does not allow her to be touched by men and by default, her father as well. Jelly's canoe functions as a vehicle of belief since she knows that she can "weave" the presence of her father. Hence, though he is physically not present at the cemetery, she can feel him there. Berta, through her stories, can discern the presence of her father. This is in opposition to Oscar who cannot feel her father's presence since he had "made a stone" out of her. From their anger and discontent at their sense of inadequacy, the image of the house trailer emerges again – they describe themselves as house trailers and look for answers in the world of art, stories and nature. The triad of perspectives which run parallel to each other become the root of contradiction in the fragmented sense of identity that these women experience.

In a rather symbolic gesture, the Holman Gallery asks Oscar to de-wing her sculpt-piece of the Wren w/2 half wings. The rejection has an acute impact because, there is a method in the sculpt-piece in which she has welded two half wings. It signifies the idea of escape into a dream, just like how she had visualized her mother. In structural terms, this pattern of rejection becomes the trope guiding the memories and perspectives of the women in this section. Hence the dialogue initiates the rejection, a fact that the three women have to negotiate in their own distinct manner. So the triad appears again with Oscar seeking answers in the rejection of her sculpt-pieces that she has welded, Berta in her stories and memories, and Jelly in her canoes. However, the structure moves towards ironical implications when we understand that the women are not referring to tangible constructs when they talk about stories, canoes and blowtorches. Jelly's canoes don't float and hence can be hung as "Canoe in flight" or "Returning the Tree" depending

on the perspective that the viewers choose. The names can be changed in tandem with the perspective and the location. As the idea of canoe moves far away from the literal, transformation of identities is symbolized by the act of renaming, a distinct possibility in Native American discourse.

The women move towards a sense of closure when they realize that though their dreams and memories may have to be symbolically packed under a 'burial mound', they will symbolically reappear in the form of their canoes, blowtorches and stories. The triad of perspectives operates yet again, to highlight the irony implicit in the title of the section as the women realize that a total sense of closure remains a distinct impossibility. They say:

JELLY. You walk through your dream with your birchbark canoe.

OSCAR. You walk through your dream with your blowtorch.

BERTA. You walk through a dream with your stories as you close the
studio door behind you. (37)

In *Jump Kiss* there is a clear attempt to capture the contrasts in the relationship dynamics between the Father, Mother, Brother and the Narrator. For example, in Plate VI, the mode of dialogue serves to highlight the contrasts in the relationships recorded in the play. The brother has a superficial view of the tattoos whereas the Girl associates them with childhood memories of being burnt at the grocer's furnace. The fire, through a process of association becomes an agent facilitating an escape from living with an "uncontainable" sense of identity. The integration of dialogue facilitates two forms of discourse patterns. The first is the interrogative pattern where the conversation assumes

the framework of a question/answer session and in the process brings out the irony in the locations of the characters. The section “Death Bed” illustrates this pattern.

FATHER. Do you regret being with me in the dark?

BROTHER. I have no regrets.

FATHER. Yes, you do. I hear them in your sleep.

BROTHER. How can you listen to my sleep?

FATHER. Sometimes I wake hearing ghosts of everyone who lived in the house, they leave their voices hanging on the walls. (131)

The Brother’s world is limited to the visible and the literal, whereas the father’s world is stretching into the realm of the abstract – a location from where he can listen to the voices of his ancestors. Since he has limited contact with the spirit realm, he cannot hear the voices of the ancients.

The second kind of discourse pattern emerges towards the end of this plate when the Mother establishes a conversational relationship with the audience, more to register the whimsical irony that characterizes years of silence in a relationship. The occasion of Father’s death releases the final ironic comment from the Mother. She says, “He should have been a vacuum-cleaner salesman. I heard the WHOOOOOOOMMMMMMMM! of his motor when he stepped into the afterlife” (134).

Such a pattern also appears in the dialogue between the Brother and the Sister. The Sister who has been conditioned to relocate her spiritual ambiguity within her everyday life is clearly in opposition to the Brother, who depends on seeable constructs like “photographs” which in his conception, operate on the single dimension of “viewing” only. He is able to correlate his decorative tattoos to the burn marks on his

Sister's legs since both involved an element of pain, but with an element of difference. His tattoos were obtained out of his own volition whereas he finds it hard to understand why his Sister knelt on the fire. Her response indicates that she has been able to relocate her cultural ambiguity within the context of her general conception of a dislocated Native American life. She says:

Maybe the fire called me to kneel before it.

Maybe I was trying to escape the evil queen of the range.

Maybe I knew the road under us would always be ice, and we'd slide over it – the walls of the house were a fjord we were passing – one sharp call and it would fall. (133)

While Glancy's primary focus is that of holding on to the past in the face of the sociocultural collisions that her stories chronicle, she acknowledges that this is a past that is receding and is now accessible through the margins of contacts. This also explains the sourcing of her plays – most of them are sourced in her own personal reflections arising out of conversations, dialogues and travel. And these reflections become the stories that her characters enter, thereby lending control to the voices that "cause" the stories.

Glancy's works show an increased tendency towards experimentation with forms, genres and structures. For example, the first play *Weebjob* approximates to a traditionally constructed play, while *The Toad Must Have A Bite*, falls in line with the idea of one-woman theatre. Still further, a play like *The Collector of a Three Cornered Stamp*, functions totally at an allegorical level, just like the *Mother of Mosquitos*, but with an increased emphasis on capturing the plurality of voices. At the background of all these experimental efforts, the dramatic emphasis lies on capturing the "engaging fractures"

that open up a space for “tradition and assimilation, preservation of a way-of-life that has all but vanished while forging a contemporary world-view in the process of being created” (*Writings* 18). Hence Glancy’s dramatic focus is on the “strip between” the physical world, the dream world, the spirit world, and the imaginative experience. When memory is integrated into this location, possibilities arise for voices and stories to happen. As a direct result of the emergence of various voices, achieving personal sovereignty becomes an achievable goal for Glancy’s characters. It can also be seen that such personal sovereignty is duly impacted by their ability to connect the personal to the spiritual and thereby engender the potential for healing within the dimension of the play. Such a process, when conceived of as a translocated Sweat Lodge ceremony, or a Pow Wow opens up avenues for spiritual negotiation with its attendant implications on the structural discourse of the play. In the next chapter, attempt will be made to study such patterns of spiritual negotiations, especially with reference to the questions regarding survival in a marginalised context.

Notes

1. Vizenor considers survivance as an ongoing process of survival, mainly through the humour and irony of stories. He says in *Postindian Conversations* – “Native stories are sound and vision, and both are survivance. See also “The Ruins of Representation: Shadow Survivance and the Literature of Dominance” published in the *American Indian Quarterly*.

2. In *Conversation*, Glancy says, “I bring a memory of the Cherokee in the back room, which I could never speak and was never a part of, but it was there (6).

3. Murdrooroo questions the postcolonial interpretations of the word “hybrid” since they rest on the belief of the existence of a “pure culture” uncontaminated by outside influence. He terms such a process as a “dubious proposition” and instead argues for an “indigenous impulse” which gives rise to a culture based on the environment (108).

4. Vizenor gives an interesting interpretation of the Turtle Island myth, which in a way, theorizes Glancy’s own conception of the creation of meaning. Vizenor describes the turtle island creation myth as an “imaginative place”, a “metaphor which connects dreams to earth”. (*Earth Divers* xv-xvi). Glancy says, “The sacred realm was the sky. It was a *rock sky* on which animals used to live but fell off to the water below, and formed mud on the surface, out of which land grew. Which was called Turtle Island. Which became America” (*The Cold and the Hunger Dance* 60).

5. Glancy uses the term “orbiculate” to describe the circular movement of the Native American Drama. (*Further* 204).

6. Wovoka (1856-1952) was a religious leader who had prophetic visions of the resurrection of the dead Paiute tribe. To realize the visions, apart from righteous living, he prescribed a Ghost Dance in a series of five day gatherings. In *Bull Star*, Cicero has three versions of the visions, the common features being those of dance, ghosts and the earth being cleared for the Indians after some kind of a deluge.

7. This is typified by the image of the underwater driftwood which is no longer accessible to her even after the process of assuming various masks.

8. In the Lakota and the Inuit mythologies, the trickster is said to have initiated the process of creation. In that sense, he functions as a native shaman.

9. Thomas King's *A Coyote Columbus Story* can be considered as a good example.

10. Arnold Van Gennep (1873 – 1957), a German ethnographer, first used the term “liminal” to describe the second stage in the three-part rites of passage ritual. He describes the liminal stage as a transitional period.

11. Ahw'uste refers to the mythical deer that appears only in the realm of visions. In a version of the legend sourced from *Friends of Thunder: Folktales of Oklahoma Cherokees*, the Ahw'uste or the spirit deer plays more of a “tutelary” role in the thought systems of the Indians. When translocated to the contextual space of the play, it implies that the mythical deer which appears only in the realm of visions is the dynamic construct which enables connections between the material and the spiritual worlds.

12. The buffalo song is significant because it is suggestive of healing after the infliction of violence and destruction.

13. This is in line with Vizenor's conception of Native American Literature as a construct for liberation, and not a “terminal creed” (*Postindian Conversations* 91).

14. The Inuits believed that the entire creation was initially under the water. Hence the underwater forests become the source of the driftwood.

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Chapter 3

Patterns of Spiritual Negotiation

The Sweat Lodge ceremony proves to be a useful metaphor, while studying the spiritual aspect of Glancy's plays - the turbulence in the sociocultural context prompts her characters to move towards the idea of personal sovereignty. In a traditional Sweat Lodge Ceremony the purpose was to cleanse and heal the individual of all the impurities both in the body and the soul. While the fire worked as a purifying agent, intense sweating was supposed to have a cathartic effect, whereby the individual recognizes the impurities in his soul and cleanses them. Of particular significance is the fact that the community is at the center of such a ceremony.

At a metaphorical level, the description of a Sweat Lodge perfectly fits in with the spiritual negotiations in Glancy's plays. Apart from the community of actors, the audience are also participants in the ceremony. Their presence is typified by their status as witnesses and sometimes co-creators of meaning, especially when Glancy provides avenues for her audience to enter the text. Further, the tensional location of the characters which is characterized by sociocultural collisions and negotiations corresponds to the intense sweating which finally engenders that required healing.

When we study Glancy's plays from this perspective, there are two implications. Though her plays are not "scripted religious ceremonies", the integration of spiritual perspectives happens as an extension of the crises arising from sociocultural encounters.¹ This ensures that the choice of selecting and reflecting elements of Native traditions

becomes an act of negotiation. In such a context, characters often find that the movement towards survival becomes contingent on exercising one's sense of personal sovereignty.

Paula Gunn Allen identifies healing as the main purpose of a Native American ceremony. The disease afflicting the individual has its source in the disconnect that he or she perceives between himself and his universe. (*The Sacred Hoop* 60) The ceremony functions to restore him to a conscious harmony with the universe. It can be established that, for Glancy's characters, survival is engendered by some kind of a ritualistic procedure, the purpose of which is to arrive at a sense of healing which in turn, enables them to move towards a position of survival. In some plays ceremonies function in a removed context and sometimes in a metaphoric context rather than the literal. Therefore, the emphasis seems to be on capturing an idea of ceremony rather than the specifics of such processes.

The idea of "survivance", as conceived by Vizenor, implies that the process of negotiation is not a one-time effort, but an endeavour that is in constant motion thereby ensuring that it becomes "a standpoint, a worldview, and a presence" (Vizenor, *Postindian Conversations* 93). This can be further elaborated by including the three conceptual strands of motion – the mythic, the material and the visionary – all of which work towards achieving a personal sense of sovereignty. In Vizenor's conception, personal sovereignty includes the concept of national sovereignty to address the individual's realization and the will to self-governance, opportunity to establish self-representation, and choice to select or reflect elements of Native traditions within the ever-changing context of one's personal life.

From Stanlake's point of view, visionary motion provides for the blending of the conceptual strands of mythic and material motion with the discourse of storying and the concept of worlds of existence. Hence, visionary sovereignty makes it possible for the creation of an in-between world from where the characters are able to access both the material and spiritual aspects of their life. Vizenor uses the term 'transmotion' to describe a key aspect of such visionary sovereignty. He says in *Fugitive Poses*, "Native transmotion is an original natural union in the stories of emergence and migration that relate humans to an environment and to the spiritual and political significance of animals and other creations" (183). Hence transmotion enables the creation of connections between the individual and his sociocultural location through agencies like stories, rituals, ceremonies or artifacts, thereby investing personal sovereignty with a visionary status. In Glancy's plays such a position is characterized by the attempts of the individual to transform the personal into the spiritual. While Vizenor's enunciation of the concept of visionary motion allows for people to first imagine and then realize their personal sovereignty, Glancy's characters often arrive at that location through a turbulence infused with the personal, the political and the spiritual.

There is an interesting dialectic between Native American tenets of spirituality and the enforced ideas of Christianity which characterize the turbulence faced by Glancy's characters. Though Glancy intensely identifies herself with her Cherokee antecedents, an aspect that is obvious in her plays, she remains "unenrolled". The spatial location of her creative endeavours not only functions as a source of marginalization, but adds an advantage to her location, because, as she puts it in *Firesticks* (1993), she is "not a card-carrying Indian. Not a card-carrying White either." (14) In her plays, such a

marginalization actually works as an advantage because Glancy, by the virtue of being in two places and also not in either place, is able to use such a tension as both a rending and a binding force across her plays. Such an aspect of her work is mostly discernible in the conflicts between Native Ancestry and Christian beliefs. The resulting tensions are manifest especially when her characters deliberate on questions regarding the sacred and the spiritual with reference to the collisions arising out of their encounters with Christianity.

The strong element of Christianity which comes across in her works can be attributed to the fact that she lived in the Bible belt region of the southern part of Oklahoma where it happens to be the primary religion. She says, “Because I didn’t have a road, because I was in the process of a journey, I still didn’t know why I was between two cultures. I still had to jump-start an image of my broken self. The Bible is full of journeys. It’s why I think it is home” (*The Cold and the Hunger Dance* 29). This statement reveals a significant aspect of characterization in her plays. Most of her characters have the strain of mixed blood heritage which acts as a signifier of the cultural collisions and issues of marginalised identity. This has a due impact on their interpretations of religion and spirituality.

Glancy’s plays reveal another aspect of marginalization, especially in her women characters. It can be seen that for them, issues of identity are intrinsically linked to socio-economic concerns, a strain that can be traced back to Glancy’s status as a single woman divorced at the age of 40. For example, while confronting her imaginary tormentor in the Church soup kitchen, the Girl in *The Woman Who was a Red Deer* narrates about her being falsely accused of pilferage. She says:

I know it was you who lost the key to the storeroom, and I had to pay for the locksmith to change the lock. They kept nearly my whole check. I couldn't pay my rent. I only got four payments left on my truck. I'm not losing it. (8)

On being forced to choose between her domicile and her car, she chooses the latter since it affords her greater mobility and a sense of ownership. Such a choice can also be read as the Girl's way of revolting against a system which would confine her to the limits of a domicile. Also operating in this conflict is the fact that with four more payments, the Girl can stake a claim to what she considers to be rightfully hers. Further, where the Grandmother considers the maple leaves to be the signifiers of her vision quest, the Girl is convinced that it is her truck which will lead her to her promised vision of love. Unfortunately, the sense of irony strongly operates, especially when the truck becomes the vehicle for picking "dudes" on the highway, who function within a limited idea of love.

Similarly, the women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* tend to align themselves against the image of a house trailer because it affords them greater mobility. Their living space, which is being denied to them because of their inability to pay rent, becomes a signifier of mobility and control. Also the women are able to transfer these attributes to the construct of house trailer, thereby suggesting that living spaces are a signifier of a fragmented sense of identity which these women share. Such a move may also suggest some form of dissociation with the land which belonged to them earlier, and which still forms a significant aspect of their lives.

In such a context, the movement towards survival becomes contingent on achieving a sense of personal sovereignty. Glancy's characters try to achieve this by exercising the third aspect of personal sovereignty - choice to select or reflect elements of Native traditions within the ever changing context of one's personal life. This explains the strong Native presence in terms of cultural references to ceremonies and rituals. Glancy conceives of ceremony as a ritual that is used over and over again until it becomes a structure that is followed (*Conversation 5*). She also integrates an element of subversion when she highlights the tensional operation of the cultural contact zones and their impact on the various rituals and ceremonies of life. To analyse such a complex and intense movement towards survival, transculturation proves to be a useful model of analysis. While focusing on the individual, transculturation combines attributes of acculturation, deculturation and neoculturation as phases in the process of the movement toward survivance, though not specifically identifying the attributes of such movement.

In Glancy's plays, conflict resolution often assumes the pattern of finding modes of survival within a "tribal-centric" context rather than complete acculturation or deculturation. Hence, transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone, often lies in the intersection between the Native American conception of spirituality and a post-colonial perspective of life. When such an idea is correlated to the author's location, we find that Glancy's marginalised perspective is not of violent resistance or mute acceptance, but of a tensional negotiation. From a ceremonial perspective, her plays can also be considered as the relocated enactments of the Sweat Lodge ceremony since they are suggestive of the necessary tension and the operation of healing through a conscious identification within a larger conception of spirituality.

However, in Glancy's plays, transculturation is not limited to Pratt's definition of the term.² The movement towards the idea of healing often borders on theorizing the marginal space between the cultural zones which leads to possibilities for contact, and the discovery of new paths of connection and relatedness between stories and cultures. For example, the Native American myth of Selu³, the Corn Woman can be compared with Christ's crucifixion. While the pattern of violence and the annihilation of life forms the common thread, the suggestive import of both signifies the power of compassion. The gap, however, comes across in the conception of spirituality. While the crucifixion is suggestive of sins and redemption, the myth of Selu imparts a sociocultural compatibility by bringing into focus the role of the woman.

Glancy's characters often turn to culture and religion to negotiate such gaps in their cultural and spiritual profile. Hence, the process of claiming a transcultural space to negotiate the upheavals caused by sociocultural encounters is not random. It assumes the parameters of a tensional negotiation between the received ancestry and contact culture, revealing the points of contact and the gaps in both. Transculturation works in three different modes in Glancy's plays – mode of a vision-quest, mode of a ceremony, and the mediational⁴ mode.

Paula Gunn Allen says, "...Native American cultures reveal evidence of direct vision as central to religious practice, ritual and literature. In most societies, the vision is actively pursued and brought back to the people as a gift of power and guidance" (*The Sacred Hoop* 107). The requirements of a vision quest are a supernatural experience in which an individual interacts with a guardian spirit. These guardian spirits, usually some form of morphed animals or birds, performed the role of the spiritual advisors, directing

the individual on a path towards his or her self-discovery. In the traditional context, this usually indicated the direction that one is supposed to take in later life. Elisabeth Tooker quotes Leonard Bloomfield's records of the Menomini Puberty Fast:

Long ago in the ancient time our ancestors, the Indians of old, used to have supernatural power, for the spirits took pity on them and blessed them, giving them their help. This was the rite they always performed: They fasted, afflicting their own souls. They ate nothing and drank nothing. Parents made their children fast so that they might therefrom gain a continuance of mortal life. This was what the faster was to get as a blessing from the spirits; this was the thing: He was to see an evil vision or else to see a good vision; this was what the faster gained, if he was really helped by the spirits. And it was through this that a person succeeded in prolonging and assuring his life (sic). (84)

As further outlined by the texts compiled, there are some aspects of such a fast which have parallels in Glancy's plays. First of all, the faster occupies a liminal position. According to the ancestral culture, young boys going through their puberty had to embark on such a fast so that they can find their guardian spirits and seek their help in their journey towards a fulfilling life.

Glancy's characters occupy a liminal status in the sense that they are located in between two religions and emerge as complex amalgams of both. She says in *The Cold and the Hunger Dance*, "I have always wondered how it was possible to combine both religions. The down-home Bible-belt Christianity. The Indian no-boundaried magical. But I had to do it. To make a dry ground in the midst of the uncertainty of my own life

and my belief system or spirituality” (43). Located in the space of uncertainty and doubt, Glancy’s characters are engaged in the process of creating a “dry ground” of meaning amidst conflicting religious faiths.

Further, if under the original sociocultural circumstances, the fasters appealed to their guardian spirits more as a form of a socially sanctioned ritual, Glancy’s characters have to make the necessary connections to the idea of ritual and appeal to the spirits in order to survive the present conflation of conflicting perspectives. Sometimes, out of sheer frustration they also realize that the spirits may choose to be silent, especially if the connection to the spiritual world is broken. Hence the process of making connections is tensional, and in some situations, a compulsive act.

Also significant is the fact that the guardian spirit or the tutelary may inform the faster about the “medicine bundle” – token objects of some special shape or quality – which become the possession of the faster. These bundles symbolize human relationship or encounter with supernatural beings. Hence, they represent a person’s connection with the supernatural. (Fowler 169) Most often, the components of the medicine bundle are visualized in a dream or a vision and the bundle itself serves as a link between the natural and the spiritual worlds. (Waldman 229) In Glancy’s plays, new meanings are assigned to such tokens of power – they function as dynamic constructs, furthering the fractured narratives of the plays.

It can be observed that the three aspects of the vision quest discussed above – the liminal location of the characters, the involvement of a tutelary and the receipt of medicine bundles – are representative of a transcultural movement towards survival. In the process, an adequate space is created for a tensional negotiation of the received and

the contact culture. For example Weebjob is located in a liminal position between his boarding school experiences of Christianity, which have left a firm imprint on his memory, and his Native American yearning for a vision of the Thunder Hawk. Hence he lives in an ambiguous location – educated in the ways of the Bible and yet holding on to the visionary experiences of his inherited culture. This ambiguity colours his behavioural responses as well. He expects Pick-Up to formally ask for his daughter's hand in marriage, as was the Native American custom. However, as opposed to Native American customs, he chooses to leave his fertile land fallow because he considers it to be his "Canaan", the place where he would ultimately have his vision. His act of fasting, though a requirement of the vision quest, appears to be contrived since it is forced by the unexplained absence of his wife. Similarly, his attempts to put up fence signs of translocated Biblical sayings represent an effort to model himself after the Biblical character Job, who was beset with difficulties. Though he is mentally prepared to face obstacles on par with Job, it is obvious that he has subscribed to this idea more out of a need to negotiate his conflicting stance between Christianity and his Native American idea of a vision quest. While his dialogues are punctuated with Christian tenets, they appear in a translocated interpersonal context. For example, he says while praying:

Humbleness of mind, meekness, long suffering. (WEEBJOB IS ON HIS KNEES PRAYING) Forbearing one another, forgiving one another. (HE MAKES A FIST TOWARD HEAVEN.) Could you make this any harder?
(49)

While subscribing to the Christian mode of prayer, Weebjob breaks the mould and enters into a direct conversation, simultaneously shedding the affected speech

patterns. This is representative of his attempt to connect to the spirit world, because from his perspective, once he makes the connection, the sense of order in his family will be restored. Here, the process of making the connection is characterized by an initial sense of disconnect, which is further exacerbated by a domestic crisis.

The third aspect of medicine bundle manifests in a translocated context in the form of his fence signs, which represent the direction of his life. When the New Age Turtle Island myth⁵ is recreated, he senses that as the vision which he had been waiting for. And in keeping with the idea of fragmented identity, the vision only helps him negotiate the ambiguities that are at the source of his chaos, rather than provide any prescriptive solutions.

Seen from the perspective of creation of meaning, it can be seen that the myth operates in the margin between the two worlds, which can also serve as a reference point for two cultures. The process of creation of land can approximate to the creation of meaning, or in the case of Weebjob, negotiating the conflicts which are sourced in his spiritual ambiguity. As Glancy puts it in *Claiming Breath*, he needs to “pull some mud, put it on a turtle’s back” (59). Such a process essentially involves translocating a cultural belief to the present sociocultural condition and arriving at a reworked meaning which would enable him to move towards survival. Therefore, instead of a token object which would function as a medicine bundle, Weebjob gets a reworked version of the myth as a vision. In a scene that is entirely composed of a visualization of stage action, Weebjob has a vision of the Thunder Hawk, but not in the traditional sense of vision. His vision is “something like a moving stained-glass window in a cathedral,” (71) indicating the extreme polarities that engender his spiritual ambiguity. Since his vision is a “new-age”

vision, it is punctuated by local references, and instead of a turtle, it is a tow-truck that pulls the land out of ‘cayos.’ The sign “WEEBJOB HAS A MAP” works as a medicine bundle, implying that he has found a way to move towards survivance. The wedding scene, which follows the vision indicates that by assenting to Sweet Potato’s wedding with Pick Up, he would not only be able to connect his spiritual world with the physical, but also come out from his sense of confusion into a location of understanding.

In *Bull Star*, the idea of liminality functions in a very subversive context, because the characters like Jack and Cree are pushed into such a zone more due to ambiguities arising from their socio-economic location. Jack wants to pursue his dream of attaining fame through rodeoing, even though it implies that he has to abandon his family. His wife Cree finds it difficult to reconcile her role of a young mother with her expectations of life. When her father, the Chief decides to disinherit her from her rightful share in the sale of their property, the concept of inheritance creates the necessary disturbance for the characters to explore the modes for survival, because the idea itself is alien to Native American social systems. Therein lies the justification for stripping the sanctity assigned to concepts like “voices” and “spirits”. Instead, Jack and his friends decide to manufacture a vision for the Chief so that he is convinced into sharing the proceeds of the sale of his property with his daughter. Such an act is justified with statements like “Truth is something you got to live with once the stories have their turn”; “Truth is something you create with your stories”; and “Truth in an empty jack-o-lantern” (163).

The implication of such statements is that the relativity of truth is caused by filling in one’s voice in its interpretation. Therein lies the justification for convincing

Lody to deceive the Old Chief into believing that he has heard the voices of the Spirit.

The following exchange between Cicero and Lody reveals this aspect.

LODY. I don't like to speak for the Great Father.

CICERO. They want you to Lody. Tell the old man that you think he
should share the depot with Cree. Do you think he should share?

LODY. Yes.

CICERO. Then you'll be speaking for yourself. That won't be hard, will
it? (171)

The fundamental idea of this deception is to convince the Old Chief that his attitude in the physical world (denying his daughter the right to the proceeds of the railroad station) will have an impact on his life in the heavens. Therefore, the process of making connections also operates in a subversive context characterized by machinations and intrigues.

In such a context, Wovoka's vision and the idea of Ghost Dance function as a relative construct which can be suitably and sometimes syncretically transcultured to support the movement towards survival. The differing versions of Wovoka's vision, which appear at various significant points in the text, while reinforcing the sense of liminality, also serve to highlight the fact that truth functions as a "creative connection" (Vizenor, *Postindian Conversations* 166), dependant on interpretation for much of its content. While the play refrains from an actual performance of the Ghost Dance, the vision of deliverance, as interpreted and reinterpreted by the characters indicates the syncretic aspect of the vision. The vision itself functions as a medicine bundle, because it holds the message of deliverance. In his first narrative of the vision, Cicero says that the

Great Spirit would take all the Indians into the safe mountains only if they continue dancing. After the deluge, only the Indians and the game would remain on the land. Dancing here essentially corresponds to the Christian idea of faith because Cicero states clearly, “The Indian who didn’t dance would go up just a few feet, not to the mountains” (147). Cicero’s second version of the vision bears correspondence with the story of Noah’s Ark. The only twist in the tale happens when the man sees a great pile of bones after the deluge and realizes that the ghosts of the people drowned had been dancing. This can be interpreted as a questioning of faith, especially when it seems to have had such violent results such as the annihilation of the entire tribes of people.

The third version of the vision, as narrated by Cicero has the Great Father playing the role of the creator. Instead of leaving behind a trail of destruction, the Great Father creates new land with sweet grass and spotted ponies. In this version of the vision also, it is only the dancing and the praying Indians who will experience the benefits of faith, while the white men with their strange ways will be buried.

Asserting her position as the moral centre of the play, Lody has her own vision which is partly sourced from her exposure to Christianity. She integrates elements like the stars which guided the Three Wise Men to Bethlehem and the suffering of Christ. In a sense, hers is a translocated vision which combines aspects of the Native American vision quest and the Christian idea of deliverance.

In *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer*, the pattern of a vision quest operates initially in the denial mode. When the visions have been denied in the traditional sense, it is up to the characters to conjure the visions in a manner which are crucial to their survival, just like how the Grandmother in the play is able to assign a visionary meaning

for the deer dress. She describes it as follows, “My deer dress is the way I felt, transformed by the power of ceremony” (14). The implication is that the process of making connections between the physical and the spiritual world is a conscious act, which is crucial for arriving at a location of survival. The Grandmother looks at natural objects like the maple leaves for visualizing the potential for spiritual fulfillment. Her description of the process of the changing colours of the maple leaves poignantly parallels the processes of a vision quest. She says:

The leaves only get to be red for a moment. Just a moment, and then the tree grieves all winter until the leaves come back. But they’re green through the summer. The maple waits for the leaves to turn red. All it takes is a few cold mornings. A few days left out of the warmth.

Then the maple tree has red leaves for a short while. (11)

The Grandmother recognizes that survival lies in reworked myth of the Ah’wuste, the spirit deer, which functions as a tutelary enabling connection between the physical world and the spiritual world. This reworked myth would turn out to be an amalgam of her received cultural and spiritual knowledge, personal engagement with the myth, and her location in the midst of the contact culture. Though constricting circumstances sometimes enforced the silence of the spirits (17), the vision was still important because recollecting it was an act of survival that bestowed some sense of personal sovereignty. The vision could be suitably altered, something the Girl realizes as her initial resistance gives way to an acceptance of the operation of the myth in her daily life. She moves towards a location from where she declares, “I’m sewing my own red-deer dress. It’s different than my grandma’s. Mine is a dress of words. I see Ahw’uste also” (18).

Towards the end of the play, the Grandmother addressing her dead ancestors says, “My relatives – I’m making medicine from your songs. Sometimes I feel it. But mostly I have to know it’s there without seeing” (17). The stories and the myths of the ancestors function as medicine songs, aiding the process of healing. The vision of the Ah’wuste operates as a medicine bundle as per the requirement of the vision quest. Aided by the tutelary Ahw’uste, the myth provides for dynamic interpretations and reinterpretations which are crucial to a sense of survival. For example, while the Grandmother offers increasingly fluid accounts on how she had actually sighted the spirit deer, the differing narratives enable the Girl to recognize that she could have heard whatever she had wanted. By extension, the deer dress and the deer dance symbolize dynamic concepts which would enable the Girl to move towards survival. This is signified by her statement at a job interview which indicates that she has arrived at a working understanding of the myth of the Ahw’uste. She tells at her fourth interview: “My grandmother was a deer. I could see her change before my eyes. She caused stories to happen. That’s how I knew she was a deer” (18). The Grandmother also functions as a mythically relative construct, more in the nature of a tutelary spirit who takes upon the role of guiding the Girl towards a location from where she can hope to exercise her personal sovereignty.

The fundamental perception of the Native American sense of spirituality is characterized by what Paula Gunn Allen would define as a “position of unity within a larger Self”; the larger Self comprises the individual and the All Spirit. Hence, she defines disease as a “condition of division and separation from the whole” (60). The emphasis of the ceremonies and the rituals was to restore the individual to a sense of unity with the whole so that he or she may resume the mystical connection with what has

been often described as “supernatural” but remains “spiritual” for the Native Americans. Therefore, the general purpose of a ceremony is to “integrate: to fuse the individual with his or her fellows...the person sheds the isolated, individual personality and is restored to conscious harmony with the universe” (62). While clarifying that the Native American tribes do not celebrate the individual’s ability to feel emotion, she states that ceremonial literature works by redirecting private emotion and integrating the energy generated by emotion within a cosmic framework. To achieve this, the Native American ceremonies work towards moving the individual beyond the dualistic terms of “natural” and “supernatural”. From this perspective, Native American ceremonial literature has a therapeutic value, the disease being the separation from a sense of conscious harmony with Nature and by extension the spiritual. The cure is obtained through the ceremony which restores the sense of conscious harmony.

Though Glancy’s plays can be classified as contemporary works of American Indian literature, some aspects of ceremonial literature can be discerned in her plays. The first is the shedding of the individual personality and the second is the restoration to conscious harmony with the universe. However, the process of restoration is complex and sometimes even problematic because of the post colonial location of her characters, which is characterized by sociocultural tensions. In fact, the sense of alienation which many of her characters experience is sourced in the assimilated idea that the natural and the supernatural are two different worlds. Their attempts to move beyond a sense of duality and create connections between the material and the spiritual world are often characterized by complexity and tension. While the transcultural space is located in the

midst of such tensional negotiations, the aspect of survivance is manifest in the layered perspectives which emerge as an outcome of the ceremonial processes.

There is an element of subversion in the appropriation of the traditional elements of oral narrative strategies, chants, symbols and dance, which are integral elements of a Native American ceremony. For example, the fox trot is used in a rather ironic manner in *The Lesser Wars* (1999). While the circular motion of the dance may signal its alliance with the Native American Hoop Dance, its orderly movement in tandem with a partner succinctly captures the role complications engendered by a social encounter in the Bel – Rae ballroom. If the Native Hoop Dance captured the sense of limitless identity of the Native American by remaining focused on the circular aspect of life, Tecoyo realizes that to stay alive in the circular fox trot, she has to shed her individual identity, and along with it, the aspect of childbearing which assigned the status of a woman to her. As the fox trot reaches its final movement in the play, she symbolically guillotines herself to integrate herself with Coytoe so that she can find meaning in her relationship with him.

It is obvious that the names Coytoe and Tecoyo are actually reversals/ distortions of Coyote – the trickster. Just like the traditional trickster tale in which the Trickster's right arm struggles with the left, the play witnesses Coytoe and Tecoyo struggling for self-definition. However the two aspects of the trickster function as two separate entities. Moreover, the annihilation, initiated by Tecoyo indicates that it is the woman more than the man, who gives up a part of herself (145). While conceiving the trickster as an androgynous entity, Glancy manages to separate the individual aspects, only to lead on to one aspect confronting the other.

In Glancy's plays, the restoration of 'conscious harmony' starts with the redirection of private emotion. In the face of sociocultural encounters, her characters reflect upon myths, symbols, stories and memories to arrive at a vantage position which enables the recognition of the conflation of perspectives that characterize their life. While trying to relocate the myth, symbol or story, they move towards a transcultural space of negotiation. Since the focus is not on achieving a static or a singular position of resolution but a journey towards survivance, the tensional alliances between Native American cultural traditions and the received knowledge of Christianity becomes the perfect springboard for Glancy's characters to move towards a continuum of survival rather than a fixated sociocultural location.

It can be conjectured that healing is engendered when her characters try to bridge the gap between the material and the spiritual aspects of life. In such a context, myths, stories, symbols and memories function as tensional objective correlatives, characterized by their constantly shifting implications. This generates a conflation of perspectives for the characters from which they move towards making connections between the personal and the spiritual. For the purpose of this analysis, the pattern of the ceremony can be seen as operating in the following manner: through relocated rituals, myths and artifacts and through the processes of mediation.

In *Stick Horse* (1999), as conflicting forces try to subdue and take control of Eli's life, it becomes clear that his "spooks" are literal manifestations of his insecurities arising out of his cultural dislocation. They are the result of his attempts to envision a world beyond the present one. He says:

You don't know what it's like having them in your head where no gun can get to them. Each night they crawl up the road with their headlight eyes.

They go right into you and there's nothing you can do. (117)

Jake believes in the presence of a Great Spirit which possesses the power to deliver Eli from the "spooks". In his opinion, the spirit of magic may have changed since the past, but the idea of spiritual peace that was associated with it remains intact. He says:

I feel the spirit of peace – I felt it long ago when I was with my father in our ceremonies. The medicine men argued over which way to sit in the lodge. They argued over the old ways – they didn't want to change. My father said our lives had changed – our magic also would change – and it would still be magic. He would keep our medicine – it didn't matter by which ritual. It was faith in the magic that kept it going. I remember sitting by my father in the lodge. I felt his spirit press into me. I feel his spirit of peace to this day. (122-123)

While Eli is the "Cherokee man and an alcoholic", his friend Jake is the "medicine man who helps Eli in the Indian way" (84). Since Jake decides to heal Eli in the Indian manner, he adopts the route of a ceremony. The key to the healing lies in Eli's recognition of his connection to the spirit world.

The purpose of the traditional Eetowah Fire ceremony is to get rid of something from the past, so that an element of newness is introduced into the life. The procedures involve lighting a smaller fire in the cabin from a large campfire and burning sweet grass, tobacco or sage. The symbolism lies in the literal burning of the past and the introduction of the newness. However, the Fire Ceremony in *Stick Horse* is located in an ironical

context. In Jake's version of the fire ceremony a smoking pipe is good enough to start the ritual rather than the traditional fire.

Eli's trysts with the Spirits seem to have no simple solutions. During these trysts, he is able to visualize himself as a "Stick Horse" – a lifeless creature, with its complement, the Spirit Horse hovering above. While this visualization fulfils his idea of a rodeo clown which had been his pinnacle of achievement, ironically, it is through this visualization that he is pulled towards the seductive spirits who are keen on gaining control on him. As he spills between the world of spirits and the world that Jake is trying to keep him in, he feels the agony of being torn apart. This is literally manifest in the game of Hang Man, which is a visualization of his actual physical disintegration. He says:

They gnaw my fingers. Eat my knuckles. My wrists. Up my ARMS! O
GOD!! The stick horse grazes my chest like grass. My heart. LUNGS!!
My spine is open to the sky. My blood runs over the grease paint on my
rodeo clown face (sic). (133)

This process of tearing apart has its own ceremonial import. It should result in Eli becoming an "Indian who plows", not a "rodeo clown who drinks". Since the community is present in the form of Quannah and Virgene, the ceremony must have had the intended impact – curing Eli from the influence of the spirits (pun intended). In fact, Glancy's original intention had been for Eli to make it. However, though Jake gives the pipe to Eli, the Spirit Dancers pass the pipe to Quannah and Virgene and roll Eli away. This can be read as Eli succumbing to the addiction rather than subsuming it.⁶

The success of the ceremony in Glancy's plays lies in the recognition of duality and attempts to resolve the same. However, when considering the fact that Eli's problem was a deep-seated one having its origins in social and cultural dislocation, total recovery remains a theoretical possibility. Instead, it is the movement towards a sense of survival which can be construed as a movement towards recovery. Such a movement is characterized by a transcultural point of view, in which the characters are able to negotiate their tensional sociocultural location. The following declaration by Eli supports such a conclusion. He says:

I'm still nowhere, but I make a corral for my stick-horse. I fill the black hole with sawdust. I will talk to the metal tumbleweed and say 'peace' to the uprisings in my head. I will sing the songs our old healer, the Stone Man gave us. (135)

These lines indicate that Eli has found a way to culturally negotiate his past and his present which indicates his movement towards survival. Within the context of his diseased status, he would still return to his native past, albeit in a relocated context.

In *Segwohi* (1999), the question that engenders the sense of alienation for all the three characters is the one which Sereh asks about Peyto and his generation: "What should Peyto do when the Indian way of life is gone for him?" (215) The phrase "Indian way of life" is used in a wholistic sense to refer to the operation of traditions, rituals and ceremonies.

While describing the setting for the play Glancy says, "The clothesline in the backyard resembles a ship's rigging where sheets pound on the line as though sails. Truly, there is the feeling of being in the middle of the vast sea" (207). This is precisely

the manner in which the characters in the play experience their sense of dislocation and alienation. Though the name Segwohi means “Two Become Together”, Segwohi finds it difficult to reconcile his past and his present. As a medicine man, he had been engaged with traditions and winter counts. But in the present, he has to contend with ideas such as divorce, inheritance of property and the commercialization of traditional myths and chants. As a result of his ensuing frustration, he becomes alienated from his son, Peyto who is twice married and his sister Sereh, who has been twice married. Though he feels that he can hear the voices of his ancestors, he resists the recognition of the complexity of a sociocultural world in which Native American beliefs and artifacts are commodified. This frustration is directly manifest in the numerous arguments that he has with Peyto.

Peyto recognizes the complexity of his sociocultural location, but has limited means to negotiate the pressures of his life. He is aware that he is seeking for peace in a world where he is not at home, but he has to contend with the demands of his family life and an incommunicative father for whom he remains a “jazz man”. This sense of disconnect is poignantly captured in his inability to hear the voices of his dead ancestors. In his search for elusive peace, he perceives a disconnect between his material and spiritual life.

Sereh lives in two worlds, though not simultaneously. In her numerous conversations with her brother and nephew, she remains the sister and the aunt who had been condemned to a life of loneliness. Though she had been married twice, as the playwright puts it, she would not want to remember either time (204). However, in her world of art, she recognizes her true self. While her act of moulding clay into surreal pottery seems to approximate to an attempt to break away from the realities of her life, it

is also representative of the attempt to find a connection between the material and the spiritual aspects of her life. Though her skill at making pots ensures that there is food on the table, more importantly, it infuses a sense of belonging and helps her to discover herself. She is able to make useful forms out of the dark fears in her head. She says about her work, “My life is bound up in my work. It’s my pow wow dance. My sweat lodge ceremony. It’s where I find soothing. (sic) It’s where I am whole” (218).

She describes her work as her “pow wow dance” or “sweat lodge” ceremony, because she feels empowered and restored to a sense of conscious harmony with her universe. Things seem to be happening her way in her world of art because the act of moulding clay helps her to connect to herself. By the virtue of this sense of harmony, she is able to have a better perspective on the conflict between the father and the son. Where the father sees a wasted life, she is able to see visions of the “medicine man” and so, she is also able to sense that harmony can be restored between the warring father and the defiant son only through the power of a ceremony.

While art becomes the platform to release the pent up fury and memories for both the father and the son, to start afresh, the feelings that they had for each other need to be objectified through a ceremonial process. When Segwohi attempts to record an act of destruction by Peyto as a winter count⁷, Sereh initially flares up and calls him a “hateful, old inciter” (239). However, her act of gluing the pieces of her broken bowl enables him to recognize the inherent fragmentation in their lives and in the process, moves him closer onto Peyto’s wavelength. This also enables him to understand the ceremonial import of Sereh and Peyto’s work. Most of all, it enables him to see that he is a human, not a Great Spirit in judgment. On the other hand, the process of making winter counts

enables Peyto to objectify the carelessness of his life, and move towards a better location of survival. They become the personalized recollections of the past, characterized by empathy and understanding.

The patterns of a ceremony are used in a similar context in *American Gypsy*, especially when Glancy tries to capture the spiritual ambiguities experienced by the narrative voice in the play. When she describes the play itself as a “gypsy” she is in effect capturing the rootlessness and the migration that most of the Native Americans experience in a dislocated context. Relocation into a reservation context also meant that people experienced a significant disconnect from their Native past, as described in the play. Such a disconnect is raised to the spiritual terms when we recognize that the characters are trying to connect the personal with the spiritual, since the material does not offer a solution to their crisis.

Frennie’s reasoning about the transformation of Indians into chickens is reflective of a transcultural negotiation of the crises that troubles Peri and Titomo. She reasons that Indians become chickens when they turn white and forget their ways. She says: “You know the story of Indians when they turn white – when they forget their ways, they grow feathers and become chickens” (72). Strangely enough, it is Frennie who approximates as the “wise woman” when she offers an explanation as to why Peri and herself are ‘gypsies’ and a justification for their loss of land. It is because they will not be bound to a place and will be ready to leave earth when the time comes. She says: “That’s why we are gypsies. That’s why we lost our land. So we won’t be stuck here. So we can be ready to leave this earth” (79).

Titomo's break from his traditional past is indicated through three aspects in the play. Firstly, his refusal to engage in any useful employment is uncharacteristic of a traditional Native American man. However, as an outcome of the reservation life, Titomo is highly influenced by his peer group of biker friends in whose company, he is always in search of employment. Secondly, there is a lack of level space for communication between Titomo and his wife Peri, which is most obvious in his refusal to allow her to access his dead mother's Native American traditional recipes, though his attitude towards his mother's past seems to be characterized by a lack of interest. His deeper confusion about his sociocultural location within the framework of his family is indicated in the following statement in the introduction, "He's still in love with his wife, though he's not able to understand her at the moment" (44). The third and the more serious departure from tradition is in the act of violence that Titomo engages in. Hunting for fun is an idea imposed by the peer culture, which is in clear opposition to the Native American spirit of hunting for survival. Titomo aims at a bird, but in a manner indicative of poetic justice, he shoots himself.

To move to a location of survival, the characters have to adopt the migratory nature of the gypsies to come to terms with their cultural and spiritual crisis. When land becomes an amorphous and an unsteady construct, it is through stories and artifacts that a transcultural negotiation becomes possible. Peri says to the dead women in the grave, "Thurlene – Is the unraveling of this life our punishment? Ocholee – We do good and bad all our lives – and can't help that either. Or is there neither good or bad, but everything is relative? – as the Indian religion says?" (60)

To recognize such relativity, a sense of connection to the past becomes crucial for reinterpretations and relocations. Such a possibility is provided by the recipes of Titomo's mother. For Peri, survival is contingent on her rediscovering her past traditions through the recipes of her mother-in-law. In addition to acting as a source of empowerment, the recipes would help her connect to her past, and in the process, negotiate the operation of relativity in life. By shedding her individual personality and locating herself as a participant in the preservation of her Native American traditional cuisine, Peri would move closer towards survival. Further, the recipes also infuse Peri with a feeling of empowerment, as the following exchange illustrates:

NEVILLE. What're you doing in there Peri?

PERI. (From the kitchen) Trying to serve something other than grease.

NEVILLE. This is my café. You don't have Ti behind you anymore.

Peri walks into the café, throws the menus into the air. They hit the floor with a clunk. (77)

While the recipes connect her to a past in which she had not been a participant, they also provide a sense of empowerment, since she can now open her own café. Given the fact that she is a "mixed-blood woman nearing forty" (44), the recipes would function as conduits through which she would be able to discover herself, albeit without the defining presence of Titomo. Hence, in a defining gesture, she is able to walk out from Neville's café.

The pattern of ceremony operates in yet another category of plays which work through mediation between the Native American and the Christian tenets of spirituality. Instead of resistance or acceptance, the characters position themselves as participants in

both the Native American religious traditions and Christianity. While exploring the meeting points between their Native American heritage and the Christian idea of forgiveness and compassion, complex meanings are assigned to metaphors, symbols and stories. These in turn act as the crucial agents which move the characters towards a transcultural space of survival. Hence the process of restoration to a conscious harmony with the universe happens through a conscious ascribing of meanings to stories, symbols and artefacts.

In *Jumpkiss*, the concern of the dramatic voice is to attempt at a definition of self against a fragmented context of religious beliefs and sociocultural encounters. Hence, the pattern of ceremony operates through transcultural mediation, especially in the storytelling mode, as the narrative voice remembers those significant life experiences which were instrumental in bridging the gap between the material and the spiritual.

The impact of the sociocultural penetration of Native American lives is clearly seen in crossfire of the family dynamics, as exemplified through the names of the characters – Father North, Mother South, Brother East and Sister West. While the father's "anger and repression" are contained in the meat that he brings home (89), the mother's hatred for messes and insistence for the "sterility of afterlife while they lived" (90) only serve to make the family dynamics dispassionate and cold. There is a clear cultural dislocation at work because the father had migrated from Arkansas to the stockyards in Kansas City whereas the mother came from the farm with a "cedar chest and orange blossoms" (90). The father wishes that he had a job that would keep him away from home at least for a hundred years and the mother ensures that the father serves his time whenever he is at home.

The idea of faith becomes complicated because the characters are made to believe that Christ had suffered for the sins they had committed and the sins which they were going to commit. For example, the girl believes that Christ had been poked with nails because she had been mean to her younger brother by stealing his nickel. In such a context, love is stripped of all its finer sentiments and becomes more of a biological necessity as evinced by the narrator in the section titled “Galoshes”. In the story, the trout had spat out Jeremy Fisher because of the rubbery taste of the mackintosh that he wore. Nevertheless, it swallowed the rubbery galoshes. The narrator equates this idea to non-fulfillment of love. But nevertheless, the wounds sustained during the process of love are left behind as scars.

It is in this context that the story of the Cherokee Strawberry Legend⁸ becomes very significant. Unfortunately the story has limited use for the woman in the play who doesn’t miss her husband in spite of being married for twenty years, thereby creating a gap in her spiritual conception of her single status. The story of the Cherokee Strawberry Legend Woman remains only a cultural legend for her – a reminder of her antecedents but not any refreshing idea of love. On the other hand, it is Christianity which gives her the message of “jump-kissing” precisely through those acts which are suggestive of the violence that had marred the narrator’s life. These include the childhood incident of getting burnt at the fire, separation from her husband at a later stage, and the pain of witnessing her son battle a life-threatening surgery.

The ceremonial aspect of the play operates through the narrative voice relocating to a position from where she is able to see beyond what is visible. A sample of this understanding can be seen in the section “A Place Between Two Trees” where through a

complex process of association, the sister is able to invest a common object like a photograph with the power of the sacred, especially through arriving at points of connection between the food served on the table and the memory of her father as an arrested vision in a photograph. She says:

When she put dinner on the table, I thought it was a photo on my plate. An old photo of a man with a hat pushed back on his head, in overalls and a white shirt and tie, as if a foreman inspecting the trees come to see if they were doing their job of shading. (130)

This is in stark contrast to the Brother who conceives of the “sacred” as a silent construct and concludes, “You can’t hear a photograph. That’s what’s holy about it” (130). He sees no way in which connection can be established between the sacred and the mundane. However, the sister says, “I can hear it. I’m cutting the photo with my knife and fork. Yes, I am eating the photograph. My father inspector and my mother invisible because she’s the one taking the photograph” (130). It can be observed that the Sister has been able to bridge the distance between the known and the unknown, the seen and the unseen, through a conscious effort at ascribing meanings to objects and memories. This also indicates that the sister has been able to bridge the gap between her Native American orientation and her acquired sense of Christianity by moving on to a location from where she can see beyond the visible and attach religious and spiritual significance to mundane objects and legends. While the sightings of the deer remind the narrator about the tutelary spirits who guide the Native Americans (139), the idea of Christ ascending the Heaven on the third day implies that there has to be some kind of purgation for a rebirth to happen. Therefore, the act of “jumpkissing” involves the process of annihilating the individual

self and seeing oneself in the context of the larger sense of the universe. By extension, such an act involves not only reopening of the old wounds, but also the ability to compassionately face the past and the present. The mediatory aspect of the play lies in the narrator's continuous movement between the Native American cultural legends and Christianity, both of which are consciously relocated within the sociocultural location of the characters.

A similar pattern can also be observed in *Salvage* wherein Memela's spiritual crisis vis-à-vis her religious affiliation acquires a mediatory aspect. In fact, Memela's spiritual crisis is sourced in her belief in a God whom she doesn't understand. She says: "I taped the page Wolfert ripped from my Bible – *I did not come to bring peace, but a sword*. Matthew 10:34. I am in the right religion. I choose to believe – though I don't understand – What kind of God is this?" (48)

While reflecting on her allegiance to her religion, Memela realizes that the very hybridity of her beliefs gives a perspective to her spiritual crisis. When she attempts to translocate a Biblical message to her location⁹, she understands that a great deal of faith would be required to resurrect her relationship with her husband Wolf. Memela says: "What does that mean? What is it like to be lifted on a cross like a serpent? What little cramped heart can believe that? Look at you peering at us from your cross – Do you take only the hurt ones on your war path? Christ – I am bitten by your love" (50).

The silent voice of the dead Mrs Stover becomes empowered in a dream sequence, when Memela receives her message of forgiveness – "Forgiveness comes through understanding the ones who harmed you" (55). The key to understanding in turn lies in an act of "Jumpkiss" – an exercise in faith, a belief in a greater controlling power

that would ensure the balance and alignment of everything in life. For Memela, the key to survivance does not lie in an isolated zone of either Christianity or her inherited Native American ancestry, but through a mediation between both. This is symbolized by the white cross that Memela places at the accident site. For her, the Cross combines attributes of violence, and healing as well. While it signifies truce and peace on the literal level, it is also reminiscent of not just the horror of crucifixion, but also the violence unleashed in the name of religious conversion. Memela explains to Wolfert the rationale of placing the cross at the accident site. She says, “The scarred place was there – the land remembers – it still carries the thump of the impact” (45). While giving due respect to land and the memories it encloses, we find that she is consciously trying to assign a meaning to the metaphor of the cross, something which would help her negotiate her present tensional location.

This perspective, against the larger implication of Mrs Stover’s message on forgiveness lends clarity to the final image of the play – the figure who is wearing a white cardigan covered with pearl buttons could very well be Memela – the Cherokee Strawberry Legend Woman retracing her steps towards her husband, Wolf. Her movement toward survivance is contingent on constantly debating her religious beliefs and questioning the very basis of faith.

Mediation works in the allegorical mode in *The Collector of a Three-Cornered Stamp*. Glancy fosters points of connection between the Biblical creation story and the Native American connection to the Great Spirit, thereby setting the context for mediation between both. In the process, the narrative voice uses the concept of war, and parallels it against the process of creation so that war emerges as an event that defines the responses

of the narrator to the various tensional sociocultural situations captured in the play. In the first section, the Vietnam War functions as a haunting presence, literally destroying the marriage of the narrator, whereas in the second section, it is the Iraqi War which destroys the natural environment. In the process of making such connections, the personal becomes not just global, but sometimes archetypal as well, as illustrated by the third war in the play. The idea of war and the destruction of nature on a global scale function as correlatives to the destruction of the individual soul at a personal level. Paralleling the Biblical process of creation, the individual stamp, perceiving itself to be a part of the eternal spirit, acquires the ability to think. From here, rebellion was but a step away, since the stamp was now perfectly capable of misconceiving itself as the creator. This is personified through the image of the stamp, which after acquiring a mind of its own, decides to separate from the Spirit. The stamps encapsulate the idea of the human being, the three corners being representative of the jagged edges of the human heart.

The confusion arising out of war and destruction is sourced in the incapability of the human heart to perceive its connection to the Greater Spirit. Therefore, though a sense of survival is necessary for fostering connections, such a process happens in a tensional manner, represented by the comparison of the human to the jagged edges of a stamp. Such an image integrates a transcultural perspective of spirituality achieved through the process of mediation.

From the above discussion, it can be observed that in the mode of the vision quest, there is an integration of Native American and the Christian elements into the consciousness of the characters which is characterized by tensional negotiation between received and inherited religious traditions against a complex sociocultural environment.

As a result, it also becomes possible to trace strains of resistance in such plays. For example in *Weebjob*, patterns of resistance are manifest in the complex visions of the Thunder Hawk, which manifest during times of turmoil. This is Weebjob's chosen method of making sense of everything, since his saviour has a form which subscribes to the Native American belief of the Thunder Hawk. His hunger for the Indian ways assumes the pattern of resistance when he visualizes the Thunder Hawk in a cathedral, an experience, which for him, approximated to a Sweat Lodge ceremony (71).

While the process of transculturation operates in the mode of a ceremony, it can be observed that the plays have limited sourcing in the tensional negotiations between the Native American religion and Christianity. For example, though the idea of crucifixion and the regeneration of life are hinted at through the game of Hangman in *Stick Horse*, Glancy's engagement is with the spiritual harmony characterized by a sense of unity with one's family or friends. In such plays, it is often found that the Christian element works from the background, operating in terms of a residual memory of the colonial impact. For example in *Segwohi*, the idea that traditional hymns, chants and art could be commodified is sourced in the post colonial location of the characters. While transcultural visualization of the sense of alienation is the outcome of the vision quest, transcultural objectification is the outcome of the ceremony.

At a conceptual level, a concept like mediation enables Glancy to explore the connections between cultures and religions – an idea that is crucial to her theory of interlocking cultures. She says with reference to *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, “The house trailers are cultures of several continents, which is another addition to the multi-dimensional aspect of new-wave oral tradition I'm trying to create, which is

interlocking cultures” (20). In *The Best Fancy Dancer*, we find that the final pow-wow that the characters engage in is more in the nature of a mediation between the imposed sociocultural norms and the inherited Native American heritage. Jess says, “Maybe a little bit of New Wave. Or Gertrude’s K-Mart hard country rock! See the oceans beating against the New World shore. We don’t know where we’re going. But we’re going anyway” (333).

The process of exploring the connections assumes the aspect of survivance, as Glancy’s characters are pushed towards recognizing the correlations between history, culture and religion on a continuous basis. Glancy’s position is not that of outright rejection of other cultures and possibilities, but that of exploration of the connections between them. In her plays, such a transcultural exploration for points of connection represents the spirit of survival.

In the midst of such explorations, it can be seen that the voice of Glancy’s woman characters often emerges to be empowered. They are located in the midst of intense spiritual experiences either as catalysts or facilitators who explore the connection between the sacred and the mundane aspects of life. They perform a key role – they function as agents engendering survival precisely through their ability to connect their everyday realities with the sacred and the spiritual. Placing women at the centre of intense spiritual experiences also becomes the route through which Glancy’s feminist concerns are located within the context of her plays, an aspect which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Typified in the intense moments when Glancy provides for the intertwining of the physical and the spiritual worlds wherein her characters cross the borders between both Eg. Weebjob, Lody.

2. Transculturation is a term originally coined by the Cuban anthropologist, Fernando Ortiz in the 1940. Mary Pratt in *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* describes transculturation as a phenomenon of the contact zone. 'Contact zone', as used by Pratt, refers to the space of colonial encounters, in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict (6).

3. In this Cherokee myth, Selu is the Corn Woman who is accused of being a witch by her own sons. While being put to death, she gives instructions for growing corn to her sons, so that the provision of food was guaranteed for them. In *The West Pole*, Glancy compares this myth to the Christian sense of new life coming from the blood of Christ (22).

4. James Ruppert defines mediation as an artistic and conceptual standpoint, constantly flexible, which uses the epistemological frameworks of Native American and

Western cultural traditions to illuminate and enrich each other (*Mediation in Contemporary Native American Fiction* 3).

5. According to the turtle island creation myth, the animals used to live on the rock sky. When the rock sky fell down to the water, it formed mud out of which land grew. Though the versions differ in various tribes as to who was responsible for pulling up a bit of mud, it was the turtle which bore the weight of the land, and hence the name, the Turtle Island Creation Myth. In a section titled 'On Boards and Broken Pieces of the Ship' (*The Cold and the Hunger Dance*) Glancy makes a reference to the turtle island myth.

6. Based on feedback provided by an actor during a presentation by the Borderlands Theatre in Tuscon, Glancy altered Eli's recovery to a "left-to-the-reader interpretation".

7. Winter Counts are historical calendars in which events are recorded in pictures.

8. In the Cherokee Strawberry Legend, it was through an intended stratagem executed by the Sun God that the woman begins her return journey towards the man. The man and the woman quarrel with each other and the woman chooses to move ahead steadily without looking back. The man follows her for some distance but gives up. That is when the Sun God intervenes and evokes the memories of the man in the woman by planting strawberries all along her way. These memories persuade the woman to return.

9. The message that emerges is: "As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up". The implication is that a great deal of faith would be required to resurrect this relationship.

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Chapter 4

From the Personal to the Spiritual – The Empowered Women

Locating women at the centre of intense spiritual experiences is not an isolated feminist endeavour in Glancy's plays, but an effort that is intertwined with her historical and sociocultural location. Most of her women play the crucial role of mediators as far as creating a conflation of perspectives is concerned. For example, though *Stick Horse* appears to be a play that primarily deals with the attempted healing of Eli's alcoholism, it is difficult to ignore the active presence of Quannah and Virgene, the two Native American women, who contribute to the ceremony in a distinctive manner. Similarly, though *Weebjob* is primarily about Weebjob's spiritual crisis, we find that the action in the play is accentuated by the attempts of the women of his house to discover their identity through exercising their choices – Sweet Grass wants to start weaving and Sweet Potato wants to marry Pick Up, a man old enough to be her father.

Such mediations appear to be modelled on the negotiation of intersubjective cultural values as described by Homi K Bhabha and augmented by Susan Stanford Friedman. Bhabha assigns crucial significance to the “in-between” spaces for examining the strategies of selfhood. In his conception, these “in-between” spaces are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. With reference to Glancy's plays, the in-between

spaces are characterized by the liminal location of the characters, particularly the women characters, who have had a significant exposure to a sociocultural system which assigns a secondary status to their womanhood. Bhabha further says, “It is in the emergence of these interstices – the overlap and the displacement of the domains of difference – that the intersubjective and collective experiences of nationness, community interest and cultural value are negotiated” (2). Further theorizing the “in-between space”, Bhabha argues that the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with a ‘newness’ that is not part of the continuum of the past and the present. It creates a sense of the new as an insurgent act of cultural translation. (10) This aspect of the interstitial perspective is also obvious in the sociocultural interstices which are represented in Glancy’s plays as sites for religious and cultural revisioning. “Newness” as cultural translation can be perceived in the revisioning of sociocultural encounters which aid the characters in negotiating their marginalised status from a translocated perspective.

Further, when Bhabha describes the social articulation of difference as a “complex, on-going negotiation” (2) he is in fact alluding to the performative aspect of such articulations which are shaped by a dialogic mediation which is characteristic of any attempt to theorize the “in-between” spaces. Hence, Bhabha makes a valid case for an interactive model of understanding gender based issues from a relational point of view. Such a relational perspective will take into consideration the contradictory aspects of the sociocultural context and the multiple constituents of identity.

As it appears, Bhabha’s model of interstitial negotiation appears to be useful because it enables the creation of a perspective that looks beyond fixed categories and the binaries, and hence aids the process of creating meaning from the “in-between” places.

An obvious implication of such a model is that culture becomes a hybrid and a political concept, often shaped and informed by the choices exercised by a character located within a marginalised terrain, what Bhabha would describe as “interstices”. In Glancy’s plays, such interstices often operate in the disconnect perceived between the culturally conditioned patterns of thought and the realities of life with which they appear to be inconsistent.

In Glancy’s plays, interstitial negotiation is sourced not only in the clash between cultures, but also in the conflation of perspectives that emerge as a result of such sociocultural encounters. Further, since national culture is a hybrid concept in the postcolonial discourse, the colonizer’s culture exerts an ambiguous influence upon the narratives of the colonized. For example, *Weebjob* integrates the complications arising out of colonial subjugation, which is obvious in his misrepresentation of the forms of social system. He says, “In the old days the father was the leader of the family. He was the thinker, the medicine man, the holy man, the elder. He was respected. No decisions were made until HE was asked, He had an HONORABLE place” (62). The capitalization of ‘HE’ and ‘HONORABLE’ is indeed significant because what Weebjob states about his society is an idea enforced by the colonial forms of social organization. The notion of a patriarchal social system is in clear opposition to what Paula Gunn Allen describes as a “woman-centered social system” (2) while discussing the traditional lifestyles of the Native American people. It is clear that the concept of male superiority has been planted through Weebjob’s encounters with Christianity in the reservation schools.

However, in Glancy’s plays, the influence of Christianity is rarely seen as a totally oppressive construct. In fact, the liminal space between Native American religions

and Christianity is open to negotiation and creation of meaning. Against such a context, the process of moving from the specific to the general, or the material to the metaphoric, does not always approximate to a transition or transcendence. To put it in Glancy's terms, such a process is engendered by a "conflation of crossroads in different perspectives", which would prevent identities from settling into fixed categories. For the creation of a conflation of crossroads of perspectives, Glancy sources her intense spiritual experiences in the interstices between the culturally conditioned patterns of thought and the sociocultural realities. It emerges that women are often located at the centre of such experiences.

As has been stated before, there is a sociocultural and political undercurrent involved in locating women as the mediators of such intense experiences. While multicultural feminism¹ clearly arose out of a need to theorize the 'differences' among women, Susan Friedman postulates that the vital and real longings for connection in between differences are equally important in an interactive understanding of gender, especially in relation to societal stratifications and multiple constituents of identity. She says, "the interplay of cultural markers of identity depends on an oscillation of sameness and difference that is historically embedded within the context of complex power relations" (76). Such a theorizing of what Susan Friedman Stanford would describe as "migratory feminism in the borderlands" is shared by Diane Glancy. She admits in an interview that feminism, as defined traditionally, can be a limiting term precisely because in the present context, the role of women is "too-conflicted, too ambivalent and too hard-core to look at"(6). When placed against a marginalised context, Glancy's women are characterized by an inner search for meaning, especially from their relational perspectives

on connections and differences. There are many different borderlands, and even America, according to her is a borderland because the “melting pot, the oneness, the one nation under God never was and never will be” (*Conversation 3*). Therefore, the longing for connection is as crucial as the perception of difference. From this point of view, Glancy’s plays can be considered as “scripts of relational positionality” (Friedman 48) which establish the perspective of a migratory borderland.²

Glancy’s women operate from this migratory borderland. Their location as mediators is characterized by their ability to see beyond the binary categories of “seen” and “unseen”. While they address the multiple loyalties of a working woman, a faithful wife, a divorced spouse or a bereaved companion, they move between conflicting cultural heritages rather than claiming racial and ethnic roots. While functioning in the marginal space between the cultural zones, they are led to possibilities for contact, discovering new paths of connection and relatedness through their cultural narratives. To conceptualize such movements, it is imperative to consider the traditional roles of Native American women and how they have transformed over a period of time. Paula Gunn Allen in the introduction to *The Sacred Hoop* discusses seven important features of the traditional Native American society, out of which three deal exclusively with the gynocratic nature of the tribal societies.

1. Traditional tribal lifestyles are more often gynocratic than not, and they are not patriarchal.
2. The physical and cultural genocide of American Indian tribes is and was mostly about patriarchal fear of gynocracy.

3. Western studies of American Indian tribal systems are erroneous at base because they view tribalism from the cultural bias of patriarchy and thus either discount, degrade or conceal gynocratic features or recontextualize those features so that they will appear patriarchal (2-3).

While the Native American societies were matrilineal to begin with, the social system was focused on social responsibility rather than the privileges accorded by gender, status or power. Patrice E.M Hollrah also voices a similar idea when she says that in such societies, men and women worked in a complementary manner which allowed for many variations in roles. She says, “Although gender complementarity is just one aspect to consider when examining literary Native characters, it provides a perspective in which to understand how these female characters can be powerful, autonomous, and valued for their contributions to the tribal community” (172). Gunn Allen also describes the women in such societies as ‘self-defining, assertive, decisive’ women (2). In such societies, women were considered to be the bearers of culture. This is obvious in the creation myths and the storytelling traditions where they have often assumed the roles of “repositories and transmitters of culture” (Laura Coltelli 5). Paula Gunn Allen points out that in many tribal systems, the oral tradition in its ceremonial and ritual aspects rests on female power. As story tellers, they could often integrate the tangible and the spiritual world. This implies that they occupied a significant position within the social matrix. Therefore, the creation of a women-focused world-view was one of the outcomes of the gynocratic organization of the society. This world-view is necessarily spirit-centered and relies on the ritual aspect of life.

Commenting on the process of systematic colonization, Paula Gunn Allen says that many Native American tribes have seen a progressive shift from gynocentric, egalitarian, ritual-based societies to secularized structures closely imitative of the European patriarchal model. Therefore, the physical and the cultural genocide of American Indian tribes had its source in the patriarchal fear of gynocracy.

In Glancy's plays the patriarchal fear of gynocracy defines the woman in terms of her relationship with a man and her domestic responsibilities which serve to inhibit any kind of attempts at self-definition. For example, Weebjob's consciousness has been irretrievably altered by his reservation school experiences. As a result, he can perceive neither his wife nor his daughter as "thinking women". The following conversation between Weebjob and Sweet Grass illustrates this aspect.

WEEBJOB. You never used to contradict me, Sweet Grass.

SWEET GRASS. Because I express my opinion, you call it a contradiction? Haven't I always been free to say what I think?

WEEBJOB. Yes, because what you've said always agreed with what I thought you should say.

SWEET GRASS. But if I should say something that didn't agree with what you think I should say, then I should keep quiet? (69)

Similarly, in *Segwohi*, Sereh's inability to have a man in her life is at the root of the diminished status assigned to her by her brother. In his opinion, the lack of a steady relationship makes Sereh ineligible for the role of an advisor. The following exchange between them reveals this aspect of role subjugation.

SEGWOHI. Where else do you have to go, old woman? Your husband left you long ago. You do nothing but make warped cellars at your potter's wheel.

SEREH. You've had someone leave you too. Don't forget I cook for you. Don't think I couldn't cook for someone else. Do you know how many old men would have me?

SEGWOHI. I checked last week and there were two. One is a woman beater, and the other just died (214).

In *Bull Star* while the Old Chief justifies his act of disinheriting his daughter with the following statement, "Women only want what they can get. A man finally has to keep something for himself"; his son-in law is convinced that just like her mother, Cree is still looking for an "egg man" (157). In *American Gypsy*, Tito's resistance to Peri accessing his mother's recipes arises partly from his insecurity. Such an act would imply economic independence for Peri, something that Titomo is not comfortable with, because he has limited her role and her space to the kitchen, as revealed in the following exchange: (52)

PERI. ...I've been wanting to read your mother's recipes, Tito. I could open those boxes in the shed.

TITOMO. Why don't you cook?

PERI. I've already fed your friends. Now they're at the reservoir or the Anadarko Pow Wow. Besides, I work at Neville's café tomorrow.

REEP. Yahoo! Fritters and homemade pies.

PERI. I've thought about starting my own café – I even thought of a delivery service.

TITOMO. You've got enough people coming here – (52)

Against such a context, we see that while Glancy's women characters attempt to fulfil their primary responsibilities of a housekeeper, childbearer or nurturer, they do not enjoy unquestioned power or status. They often negotiate questions of identity within the frames of a society based on privileges and conformity. We see them constantly trying to receive, interpret and reinterpret the rationale behind the ritual and the meaning behind the story. In the process, they revert to their roles of healers, dreamers and shamans. For example in *The Women who Loved House Trailers*, the narratives of Berta, Oscar and Jelly are more than stories of their problems and limitations. The very process of telling the story is assigned ritual significance with the healing aspect embedded in it. And while narrating stories from their Native American repertoire as well as similar instances in the Australian culture, they attempt to show that the concept of "interlocking cultures" finds a chord in the versions of the stories, which ironically function as stories by themselves. This is intrinsically linked to sharing in a "worldwide culture", the final point in Allen's discussion on the unique aspect of Native American society. Such an aspect of diversity and sharing helps Glancy to negotiate and look beyond the usual definitions of feminism which she feels are very limiting. She attempts to look at her women from a very personalized stance, something which she refers to as "she-donism".

The first reference to the term appears in *Claiming Breath*, where in an essay "Shedonism", she says that a woman is defined by her relationship to herself as opposed to the idea of defining a woman with reference to a man. In the essay titled 'Fragments/Shards' she narrates her quest for finding her individual voice after her divorce using the pattern of a journey towards "ani-yun-wiyu", a Cherokee term for the

journey towards 'real people'. Her purpose was to discover the truth of her voice, in relation to various other voices that periodically intruded during the course of her life experiences. This, according to her, becomes the source of the pleasure of being a woman. If we consider the literal break up of the words, it would be tempting to consider she-donism as a movement in opposition to he-donism, and straitjacket the feminism of Glancy's plays as that of gender based oppositions. Moreover, there is also the pursuit of pleasure aspect which is assigned to hedonism. However, it is important to delineate that the word 'she' is justified by the significant presence of her women characters who are distinguished by their urge to discover their voice. They parallel the playwright's personal journey by trying to search for answers in the interstices between sociocultural encounters, and religious affiliations. The fissures and contradictions of everyday life push the women into the realm of the spiritual, just like how divorce pushed Glancy into a spiritual reassessment of her own location. From her own marginal position Glancy conjures a way in which she can create points of contact between the Native religious constructs and the acquired/enforced religions through transformations of everyday life experiences. This is the path that most of her women characters adopt, while moving towards a location of survivance.

During the course of such a movement, Glancy's women look at everyday life experiences from a spiritual perspective. While they function essentially as mediators, it can be seen that such a role has been appropriated from the traditional healer archetype or the 'shaman'. In a translocated perspective, they function as healers mostly by aiding the process of looking at the 'familiar' from a new perspective. Glancy's feminism treads the spiritual path - women initialize, catalyse or aid the process of mediating between the

conflicting demands in a translocated context. The pursuit of she-pleasure is intricately linked to the connections engendered between the personal and the spiritual. In Glancy's plays, the converse also holds good. It is through the recourse to the spiritual that women gain a better understanding of their roles in a translocated context and gain a justification for survival. The element of she-donism is obvious in the attempts of the women to define themselves beyond the confines of the relationship with a man. Sometimes, the element of she-donism is also obvious in the strategy behind the choice which is symptomatic of the attempt to move beyond the confines of a relationship.

We can examine the roles of women in Glancy's plays with reference to the interstitial location in which they are placed, and the processes of negotiation, which are often problematic and tensional, especially with reference to issues of faith and womanhood. The common path that informs their journey towards such a location is the "spiritual understanding of womanhood as an expression of spirit" (Gunn Allen 208). Therefore, instead of being relegated to the status of helpless victims, Glancy's heroines emerge as empowered women, the source of empowerment being the recognition of the "newness" as an insurgent act of cultural translation (Bhabha 10).³

Bhabha's concept of the interstitial perspective necessitates the move away from "class" and "gender" as primary conceptual and organizational categories, so that due awareness is devoted to issues like race, gender, generation, institutional location, geopolitical locale and sexual orientation which function as the constituents of identity. Friedman also supports such an idea when she says that any given identity can be read as the place where different axes such as race, ethnicity, gender, religion, class and sexuality

interact (Friedman 109). She posits that no one axis exists in pure form, but each is mediated through the others in the form of historically specific embodiments.

In Glancy's plays, it is often tempting to assume that gender and race are the main constituents of the interstitial perspective, especially when it has already been established that women are located in the midst of significant experiences. However, Glancy locates her women characters in a complex matrix where two or more of the above axes mediate through various sociocultural processes. In achieving such a mediatory framework, Glancy opens the path for a conflation of perspectives, from where "empowerment" becomes an attainable goal.

For example, when considering the characters of Sweet Grass and Sweet Potato, the interstitial perspective would integrate mediation between race, gender and religion. The diminished status that Weebjob assigns to the women of his household has its origin in his reservation school experiences and his encounters with Christianity. So, when Sweet Potato announces her decision to marry Pick-Up or Sweet Grass decides to take a break from her husband, his initial reaction is that of resistance. The power play arises clearly because Weebjob is unwilling to transfer any decision making authority to the women of his house, a trait that he shares with Segwohi. This is in contradiction to the position of respect and authority assigned to women in traditional Native American communities. So the aspects of gender and race operate within the construct of religious translocation which ensures that Sweet Grass and Sweet Potato are consigned to a marginalised status.

Similarly in *Segwohi*, Sereh is marginalised by her brother due to the lack of a stable relationship in her life. However, in her case, the interstitial perspective is further

defined by the mediation between gender and ethnicity. In fact, one of the major contentions that Segwohi has against Sereh is that she has commercialized the sacred processes of art for economic reasons, failing to recognize that Sereh is in fact doubling up as the provider for the household through her income. While at one level, this can be indicative of a changed role orientation in the Native American community, Glancy also makes it amply clear in her plays that terms like “community” and “family” undergo an upheaval in the context of the reservation life that most of the Native Americans were forced to lead. This leads to a fundamental dissociation in the dynamics of family interaction, as seen in *Salvage*. Wolfert’s resistance to Memela’s Christian adages is definitely not prompted out of a lesser conception of women. In fact, his conversations with his dead wife Phoebe reveal the extent to which he is willing to reassign the traditional role of a woman as the guide for the family. What he resists in Memela’s personality is the desire to conceive of her life on purely socio-economic terms, something that would necessitate a split from her husband. As the play reveals, Memela’s marginalization has little to do with her location as a woman. It has more to do with her location as the wife of the man who killed another man’s wife. So gender functions as an axis of the interstitial perspective with reference to the roles played by women. Memela is positioned between her Native American heritage and the encounters with the contact culture are exemplified in her desire for independence rather than responsibility.

In *Halfact* and *The Lesser Wars*, marginalization has an aspect of sexual suppression. In *Halfact*, the Coyote Girl is marginalised due to the supposed encounters with contact culture which have stripped the “sacred” from the “sexual”, thereby altering the very nature of the institutional location of women. In a direct act of subversion,

though the Coyote Girl fills the shoes of her mother by baking bread at the hot oven, accepting such a responsibility also implies the implied sexual harassment at the hands of her brother and her father. From the interstitial perspective, sexuality functions in a subversive context from where the Coyote Girl emerges as a doubly marginalised individual after due mediation between gender and the processes engendered through the “supposed” encounters with the contact culture.

In *The Lesser Wars*, sexuality becomes one of the major axis of the interstitial perspective, with the changed perspectives on gender roles becoming a major point of mediation. Against a backdrop of the encounters with the received culture, narrated in the form of Columbus’s diaries of his voyage to America, and Tecoyo’s experiences with her former husband, Tecoyo realizes that she has been marginalised by the virtue of her gender. Sexuality is presented in a subversive context, especially through the inclusion of hysterectomy as a procedure for transcending a personalized sense of identity.

Tracing the operation of such interstices implies that the question of identity is intrinsically linked to locating the character spatially. An outcome of such an exercise is that the geopolitical space of the character “inflects” their perception of concepts such as self, community and family. For example, Memela in *Salvage* is influenced by the limits of the reservation life. The women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, are fundamentally defined by their inability to envision ‘home’ as a solid construct. Peri in *American Gypsy* is defined in terms of migrating from the location of a wife defined in terms of her domestic responsibilities to a bereaved woman who wants to make the transition into an empowered individual. In other words, the self is located in the context of the intercultural encounters which bring to relief, the difference which operates

between the interstices and the attempts to locate points of connection between those differences encountered. In such narrative strategies, the motivation for empowerment lies in the encounter of the self in an intercultural context.

While discussing the necessity of looking beyond differences as far as feminist studies are concerned, Friedman makes the point that theories of power, empowerment, identity and subjectivity need to spotlight the space of relational interaction as much as they examine the space of difference (104). While empowering her women characters, Glancy looks beyond differences to engender points of connection. It would be interesting to consider that, in the absence of the relational aspect of interaction, Glancy's women would emerge as victims rather than empowered individuals. It is precisely through their ability to make the connections across the differences which they perceive in the cultural, social, personal and spiritual aspects of their life that they emerge as empowered individuals.

For the purpose of the analysis, it would be useful to examine the process of empowerment through the deconstruction of the patriarchally oriented hierarchical structures. This will take into account the interstitial perspectives, which act as the source of sociocultural encounters which in turn push the women into considering "newness" as an insurgent act of cultural translation. In Glancy's plays, patriarchy-oriented hierarchical structures can be observed with reference to two aspects. First is the appropriation of the decision-making authority whereby women are relegated to marginalised roles within the matrix of the family. Second is the denial of access to spirituality, because of which, women strive to make connections between the personal and the spiritual. In most of the cases, such a process is subverted at a very basic level.

One of the effects of colonial subjugation has been to suppress the voice of the woman, so that the historical perspective which emerged was often a one-sided story. The suppression of the voice of the woman essentially implied the appropriation of the decision-making authority. The quintessential Native American woman, in the tradition of the Grandmother Spider was considered a wise entity and was deemed to be the source of the creation itself. Translated into social terms, it implies that the woman occupied a crucial position in the family dynamics. Glancy's women try to claim this position by restructuring their relationships so that their voices emerge empowered. It can be seen that such acts are intrinsically involved with the larger vision of their identity in a fragmented context.

At the beginning of *Weebjob*, Sweet Potato is described as having a mind of her own. Further, it is said that she is unhappy with her life specifically because she does not know where she belongs. Her act of hitch-hiking the interstate to Gallup can be read as an attempt to find a sense of belonging and meaning in a paradigm different from the one in which Weebjob exercises his parental control. This is typified in the conversations between the father and the daughter, which are laced with sarcasm. While the father describes his daughter as "stubborn" and "recalcitrant" (21), the daughter is convinced that her father has not understood a word in the Bible (20). Further, her insistence on being addressed as Suzanne Long Chalk and not as Sweet Potato, is also representative of an attempt to forge a sense of identity that would deny the suppressive presence of her father. It can also be read as an act signifying her willingness to embrace a Christian identity instead of her Native identity.

It can be seen that her act of circumventing her father while making a life decision is imbued with sociocultural implications. First of all, the act itself enables her to participate in the decision-making process. Secondly, by rebelling against her father and not including him within the perspective of her decision making, she is actually resisting the colonially transmitted patriarchal superiority. Thirdly, her act of getting married is intimately tied up with her “vision-quest” towards Gallup, a place to which she often hitchhikes in search of her true self, only to be constantly reminded about her marginalised status as a woman. Though her marriage to Pick Up would be a life of “unending subjection” (48), the promise of a chance to be on her own and do as she wants is something that she finds it hard to resist. Therefore, she restructures her relationship with her father and with Pick-Up in such a manner that she emerges as the decision maker. For a start, she chooses the man she wants to marry and then proceeds to have the wedding in the exact place that she wanted. Since the church has always had a stifling presence in her life, she chooses her father’s squash patch as the venue for the wedding. And in due deference to her wishes, she is addressed as Suzanne Long Chalk during the ceremony.

Glancy captures an interesting dialectic between the younger woman Sweet Potato and the older woman Sweet Grass. While Sweet Grass has just started understanding herself as an individual, she also recognizes the connection that she shares with her husband, even though he often falls short of the man he wants to be (58). While Sweet Potato takes recourse to resistance and denial, Sweet Grass resorts to temporary separation and reunion. Her letters to her family members chronicle the days she spends away from Weebjob. However, she chooses not to communicate with her husband. Also

of significance is the sequence in which she recollects her life with Weebjob. She says, “I wanted to get back to my loom behind the house. I even missed Mighty Warrior sleeping under my feet while I weave. I even missed you too, Weebjob” (54).

Weaving is indeed her resolution (45) because she remembers her loom ahead of her husband. The separation from Weebjob is a prelude to the act of taking over the decision making authority within the context of the family. This is obvious in the contrasting opening and the closing scenes of the play. When the play opens, the voice of Sweet Grass is almost absent. Towards the end of the scene, Weebjob is surprised to know that his wife is writing to everyone except to him. For a woman who would hardly look at Weebjob, or speak anything to him, the sudden expression of voice becomes possible through writing letters. And when she appears in the play, we don’t see the demure and the silent woman whom Weebjob had picked up from the female seminary. In her place, we find the empowered Native American woman, who deftly negotiates a truce between the warring father and daughter and engenders a process of healing between the father and his children. In an act symbolic of restructured relationships, she takes over the arrangement of the wedding on the squash patch and in fact, directs Weebjob during the course of the ceremony. This indicates that she manages to extend her boundaries beyond the kitchen to a world in which she can actually play a significant role in the family dynamics.

Gertrude in *The Best Fancy Dancer* combines the best of both the colonial culture and her Native American religion while restructuring the essential relationship between a man and a woman. While doing so, she gives her own voice to her story by telling it in her own way. For example, she can hear the spirits not just in the woods but also in K-

mart (295). The voices that she hears on her porch are company to her, probably more than her husband who while alive, preferred to spend his time fishing with his neighbour, Henry. By moving away from the traditionalist approach, which considers the entity to be at the centre of the universe, Gertrude has attuned herself to a spiritual world where Christianity can co-exist with her traditional culture precisely because of her ability to sensitize herself to the world around her.

Another powerful, yet a silent voice is that of Cree's mother in *The Bull Star*, who seems to be speaking from beyond the grave. The Old Chief says about his wife, "Listen, I could have been a chief. My wife stood outside the election booth and told everyone what a rotten ass I was. I lost"(180). However, based on Cree's recollections, it is made amply evident that her mother had left her husband more out of dissatisfaction. When Jack confesses his rodeo passion to Cree, she says, "He was always gone. Moving on to one place or another. He'd write sometimes and try to get my mother to follow him, but she wouldn't. We stayed on the old place until she got tired of waiting" (156). It is significant to note that neither Cree nor her mother were a part of their husband's dreams. Just as how Cree's mother was not a part of her father's dream of becoming the Chief, Cree could never be a part of Jack's rodeo dream. This is a far cry from gender complementarity, which was a salient aspect of the Native American societies. In fact, it can also be construed that becoming a Chief or excelling at the rodeo act is an aspect of the quintessential American dream, which laid emphasis on individual achievement rather than familial harmony. Cree's mother emerges as the silent voice that empowers her daughter with the knowledge that it is possible to actually let go of Jack. In fact, she makes a great leap in her conception of her marginalised status when she tells Jack

towards the conclusion of the play, “Go on. They’re waiting for you. You can ride the bulls in the rodeo and stay on or fall off. I don’t care. Do what you want” (187).

Sereh in *Segwohi* restructures her relationship with the two significant men in her life – her elder brother Segwohi and her nephew Peyto – by overthrowing two aspects of patriarchal culture. While Segwohi is preoccupied with his son’s inability to rise to the position of a Medicine Man, it is Sereh who puts the food on the table, and thereby gains a sense of self worth. Further, she appropriates the role of Medicine Woman in such a manner that in a situation of crisis, she becomes the mediator for peace and healing.

Segwohi concludes that his son would never be able to know the Great Spirit’s voice because he is twice divorced and had been to jail on drug possession. Hence, he could never be the Holy Man. He finds it hard to recognize that the source of Peyto’s problems lies in the fact that the Indian way of life does not exist for him. On the other hand, Sereh recognizes that socio-economic problems of Peyto have their source in the cultural ambivalence he experiences in the face of intercultural encounters. She is able to empathise with him when he says, “We’re here to make our own way on this open prairie – we’re supposed to stand while being pulled one way and then another – the job, the white world, the Indian’s” (219).

In the introduction to the play, it is stated that Sereh has lived under her brother’s shadow all through her life (204). This implies a marginalised location, which is further exacerbated by her inability to have steady relationships with men. However, as the play proceeds, we see Sereh slowly assuming control of the direction of the conversations, directing her brother and nephew onto the path of healing and forgiveness. She emerges as the Wise Woman, who is able to assign a spiritual import to the process of making

pottery, or the purpose of making winter counts. At the beginning of the play, Segwohi reduces her to an insignificant position and considers her an eavesdropper. Further, when she narrates her dream, his statement – “The Spirits visit a woman in such a way” (226) betrays a tinge of sarcasm fuelled by a patriarchal relegation of women to domestic chores rather than Spirit related matters.

However, the dream remains significant in two ways. Firstly, it metaphorically captures the process of systematic colonial subjugation that people like Segwohi, Sereh and Peyto had experienced. The slaughter house that Sereh sees in her dream is “presided over by the wagon”, which symbolizes the onslaught of the colonial aggressor. Secondly, the dream enables her to visualize Peyto as a seer. In such a vast slaughter house, she hears Peyto’s cry as a representative voice of an entire generation which witnesses the sociocultural onslaught engendered by colonial subjugation. In her conception, Peyto is actually a seer, albeit in a relocated context. However, she stresses the fact that he needs support by underlining the point that she had seen Peyto crying alone. It can be concluded that Sereh’s source of empowerment lies in looking for meaning in both the familiar and the unfamiliar aspects of life. An example of the first is her search for meaning in the acts of making pottery, and an example of the second is the interpretation that she gives in what she construes to be a dream.

Paula Gunn Allen makes an important point while discussing the position of the “Woman” in the Native American culture. The Native American Woman did not essentially function only as a fertility goddess but also as the spirit that informs right balance, right harmony, which in turn orders all relationships in conformity with law (14). Native American women, through their chants, rituals, activities and visions, could

access the world of spirits. This implied that while they were capable of communicating with supernatural beings, they could also function as Medicine Women, engendering healing through rites, rituals and chants. Within the sociocultural matrix, they often occupied exalted positions like that of the Medicine Woman. However, the patriarchal influence of the colonizers functioned at a fundamental level to deny such status to women. Gunn Allen locates such processes of subjugation to the Puritan, Catholic and Quaker and other Christian missionaries who made every effort to remove the gynocratic social system that was at the heart of the Native American society.

Another effect of the patriarchal influence was that the Native American women were marginalised to such a position that they were denied any access to their own sociocultural heritage, which essentially functioned as a source of dynamic images and role models like the Old Spider Woman, Corn Woman, Thought Woman.⁴ Such models of womanhood were defined by their spiritual power and their ability to function as mediums between the spirit world and the world of humankind. However, the prototype instilled and reinforced in the female seminaries approximated to that of the passive Madonna⁵. For example, the first thing that Weebjob remembers about Sweet Grass while at the Indian Female Seminary was her passivity. He says, “She would hardly look at me, much less speak anything to me” (31). Segwohi questions his sister’s ability to communicate with the Spirits and Eli in *Stick Horse* mocks Quannah by derisively addressing her as a “medicine woman” (118).

Another aspect which worked to undermine the spiritual power of Native American Women was the basic conception of spirituality itself. For example, the Cherokee spiritual world encompassed the entire creation and was not confined to a

single image or a deity. Their spirituality worked more through the personification of the natural phenomena which were often assigned religious significance. However, when schooled in seminaries where the idea of God was often reduced to a tangible form and the concept of sin and punishment became a stable construct, women had to contend with walking the middle path between the idea of faith as reinforced by the formalized Christian models and the fragmented Native American consciousness. Memela in *Salvage* is at one extreme since she finds an answer to her personal crisis in the model of forgiveness as personified by Jesus Christ at a larger level, and by Stover's wife at a localized level. Such ambivalence finds an expression in *Jumpkiss* as well, where the narrative voice is engaged in a dynamic interplay of the Christian and the Native American elements of sin and punishment. In terms of the interstitial perspective which Glancy presents, we find that her women access their spiritual power in a subversive context. Such attempts to access spiritual power, while indicating their ability to comprehend their marginalised location, are representative of their efforts at cultural persistence. In Glancy's plays, attempts to access the spiritual power can be analysed from the following perspectives: contextual recasting of traditional myths, images and legends, animal transformations and the process of creating a "reinvented oral tradition".

In *The Lesser Wars*, when the act of hysterectomy is seen vis-à-vis the tradition of the War Woman in the Native American context, it can be discerned that Glancy is hinting at the larger issues of exercising power in the context of relationships. There are a few significant aspects of the War Woman tradition, as discussed by Gunn Allen with reference to the Keres which can be correlated to Tecoyo's location. The stories of the twin sisters Uretsete and Naotsete in the Keres mythology, who were sung into life by the

Thought Woman, generally involve the transformation of Uretsete into a male. This aspect is obvious in Tecoyo's efforts to subsume her identity within that of her male counterpart, Coytoe. Further, the Keres warfare involved the use of ritual institutions to deal with antagonism between people and groups, an aspect which can be extended to most of the Native American tribes. In the play, such an institution operates with reference to the dried bear ovaries, which serve to resist the idea of motherhood and instead embrace the tradition of the Warrhameh. Tecoyo describes the significance of her dried bear ovaries as follows: "The part of me that wants to remain barren. The part of me that the 'Warrhameh' – the war woman who wears the ovaries against conception. I don't really want to be pregnant. The terrible responsibility, you know. It's the male in me. I guess" (151).

The phrase 'terrible responsibility' hints at the relocated context in which Tecoyo has to assert her power by giving up a part of her identity. While her composition "My Child" expresses her desire to bear a child, the dried bear ovaries at her waist represent the vision of the Warrhameh. Moreover, in her context as a single woman, motherhood indeed becomes a terrible responsibility since she would not receive any child support. However, it is also crucial to consider that the politics in such a decision revolve around her undeclared intention of re-scripting a new aspect of her identity, which is not contingent on childbearing. In fact, she hints at her marginalised location by describing herself as part of the "Flat Earth Society". She says:

I belong to the Flat Earth Society.

It's a group for women.

It's what men have always done to us.

Saying we'll fall off if we go too far.

Maybe that's where my cabin is –

The place I've always dreamed of (160).

The "Flat Earth Society" essentially functions as a metaphor for the limitations imposed upon women in terms of a vision quest. By choosing to model herself after the image of Warrameh, she can move to a location wherein she would not be confined by such limitations. Therefore, while fighting the war of relationships, the ritual act of obliterating herself functions as an act of empowerment so that the woman can emerge as a survivor.

The integration of the figure of Coyote, the shape-changer, is also significant from the perspective of androgyny which Glancy hints at in the play. To emerge as a survivor, Tecoyo has to combine her identity with that of Coyote, who denies her the dream of motherhood. In a symbolic gesture, he pulls away her foetus and guillotines it. What he has actually done is to root out the idea of motherhood, a vision that Tecoyo would never achieve, since it is inconsistent with her quest for survival. To function as the Warrameh in a relocated context, and to discover the New World of barrenness she has to give up herself to become one with Coyote.

Gunn Allen describes the Grandmother(s) as the Old Spiderwoman figure, who weaves together everything into an interconnection (11). The Grandmother(s) is also responsible for the creation of the firmament, the earth and all the spirit beings in it, by thinking into being. The Grandmother in *The Woman who was a Red Deer*, performs a similar role, albeit in a relocated context. She uses the Ahw'uste as the vital tool which enables her to connect to the world beyond the "tacky world" (15). However, in a frame

of a dialogic mediation, she encounters opposition in the form of the Girl who consistently questions the presence of the Ahw'uste. Located in a liminal space between her Native American antecedents and Christianity, the Girl is able to integrate only the seeable aspect of the world into her consciousness.

It can be observed that myth of Ahw'uste does not lend itself to a particularized description either for the Grandmother or the Girl. The belief in the Spirit rests upon a personalized interpretation which is a matter of faith. In the process of such questioning, the marginalised status of the Grandmother and the Girl are revealed. While the Grandmother had to struggle with a life in which she could not think of wanting love (16), the Girl faces an economic crisis after the loss of her job, in addition to experiencing only ephemeral ideas of love. Uniting both the Grandmother and the Girl is their search for spiritual fulfillment. However, while the Grandmother chooses to wait like the maple tree, the Girl tries to find solace in temporary relationships.

While recognizing her marginalised location and the limited visibility of the Spirits in her life, the Grandmother tries to look for connections and correlations in the world of Nature. She uses the metaphor of the maple tree waiting for its red leaves and she says, "We're the tree waiting for the red leaves. We count on what's not there as though it is because the maple has red leaves – only you can't always see them" (12). Hence, to connect with the Spirit World, there is a need to presuppose and believe in a connection between the physical, natural and the Spirit world. Naturally, the Girl has trouble accepting such an idea since she subscribes to the concept of locating Jesus in the form of "dudes on the highway" who promise her only a limited idea of love. Being schooled in the ways of Christianity, she emerges as a representative of Western

Materialism as opposed to the Native American sense of spirituality represented by her Grandmother. As they try to interpret and accommodate the myth of Ahw'uste to their marginalised location, they are in fact engaged in a process of cultural translation to empower themselves spiritually. The myth and the accompanying idea of deer dress and deer dance become fluid constructs which are culturally translated into the contextual requirements for the Grandmother and the Girl so that they can arrive at a location for survival. Such a perspective is supported by the final narration of her job interviews by the Girl. She says:

So I told 'em at my first job interview – no, I hadn't worked that kind of machine – but I could learn.

I told 'em them at my second interview the same thing –

I told 'em at the third –

At the fourth I told 'em –

My grandmother was a deer. I could see her change before my eyes. She caused stories to happen. That's how I knew she could be a deer. (18)

While at the first interview the Girl appears to be willing to learn the machine, an aspect which hints at her encounters with the contact culture, by the fourth interview, she affirms by her Native American roots by talking about her grandmother. This becomes a process of cultural translation. While the image offered by Western materialism is that of the static machine, her Native American culture offers her the dynamic Ah'wuste.

The power of the Native American transformation myths, as discussed by Richard and Judy Dockerey Young lies in their ability to bring about new transformations. Animal transformations speak to a new generation of listeners and empower it with the

means to bring about transformation in itself (11). This implies that transformation is a dynamic process which depends upon the participation of the listener or the subject, in a process that would empower them to see beyond the seeable and connect the physical to the natural and thereby the spirit world. In her interview to Jennifer Andrews, Glancy asserts her belief in animal transformations and extends it to the Biblical story of Neduchadnezzar⁶ as well. She describes such transformations, which are an accepted construct in Native American mythology, as magic performed by “conjurers and magicians”. It is indeed significant that Glancy permits such animal transformations to her women characters. In *Mother of Mosquitos*, the concepts of ‘woman’ and ‘animal’ are intrinsically connected to the aspect of the life-sustaining blood. The mosquito flies beside the Woman because, as the Chorus says, “Her life’s in our blood” (275). As the Woman steps into the underwater, she dons a fish-mask, and asks to be wrapped into the seal-skin tunic. The process of transformation into the Mother of Mosquitoes turns out to a spiritual way of empowering her sense of identity. The fish mask and the sealskin tunic, in addition to the quest for driftwood are sourced in the Inuit culture.

Carl Waldman describes the contemporary Inuit life as one in which rifles and shotguns work instead of harpoons and spears. People prefer power driven canvas canoes instead of driftwood kayaks, and synthetic clothes instead of hand-made sealskin ones. A similar context works with a subversive force in the play, as is evident in the following utterances by the Chorus:

Make a fire from driftwood,

We tired of blubber-fire.

We tired of blubber. (276)

To attain empowerment, the Woman has to reestablish the connection between her self and the natural world. When she locates the aspect of animal transformation within the limits of her persona as a life-sustaining woman, she is able to unlock the scope for “magic” to operate and thus, enable the perspective of looking beyond the visible and the familiar. Such a process necessarily involves the recognition of the role of the woman as the carrier of dreams and visions, but not a fertility goddess alone, as the following lines imply:

I become one with the mask,
Sweet mask
No childbirth pains.
No tattooing-needle in my face,
No soot-black thread drawn through my cheeks. (276)

Hence, by extension, Glancy is able to locate the play in the “Village of Ice in the Far North of the Imagination”, indicating that the process of making such complex associations is actually a powerplay that is taking place in the mind of the Woman, so that some sense of balance and harmony is restored in her living environment

In *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, Oscar declares: “My mother was a wren. She made a nest from her anger and discontent” (23). In the Native American mythology, the wren is conceived of as a mysterious bird.⁷ By associating her mother with the wren, Oscar hints that through the very act of silencing, her mother had not been accessible to her. The imagery of an entrapped bird, suggests that the cause for the discontent could have been sustained repression by her husband. In fact, she says:

My father was a minister. If my mother spoke, he quoted the Bible. I will multiply your sorrow, Genesis 3:16.

She finally chirped from the little birdhouse of her head. (27)

The colonial impact of Christianity can be clearly discerned in the silencing of the woman. Her reported transformation into a wren probably enabled her to connect to the “magical” and hence empowered her spiritually. But Glancy locates such a transformation subversively because such a transformation isolated her from her children. Oscar plaintively asks: “Mother, why didn’t you listen? Why didn’t you open your wren-ears and hear? What did you have to chirp about?” (24)

At a later point in the play, we see such a transformation into a wren ironically appearing in the sculpt pieces of Oscar. While she names her sculpt piece as a “Wren w/2 half wings”, the Gallery advises her to de-wing the bird since it is too large for their space. This is similar to the status of a woman in the colonial context, since she has been denied access to the magical and the mysterious. While Oscar’s mother had suppressed her anger and discontentment, Oscar empowers herself by redirecting those emotions into her sculpt-pieces.

In some of the plays, Glancy hints at possibilities for animal transformations, though not clearly delineating them in the play itself. For instance, she says in the introduction to *American Gypsy*, “Peri and Frennie are sisters. Frennie’s name is also Chicken Baby, because sometimes there is a possibility of shape changing” (44). There is no actual instance in the play where the dramatist gives a clear indication about the shape changing of Frennie into a chicken. However, Frennie is seen dressed in chicken feathers,

wearing a cross on her back. The stage directions say that she is walking down a dirt road holding a sign – “They die so we can live” (81).

In the story “A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings”, Gabriel Garcia Marquez describes the human response to a phenomenon which is perceived to be unnatural and magical. An old man with enormous wings is confined to a chicken coop and becomes an overnight celebrity precisely because of his strangeness. The Old Man also emerges as a symbol of Christian apathy, as represented by the colonizers’ outlook on religion and spirituality. However, unlike the Old Man, Frennie appears empowered, albeit in a similar context. Her chicken feathers are representative of her connection to her spiritual world, which she can access whenever required. She also emerges as the representative Native American who has been pushed into the mode of migration through a gradual process of acculturation. Perhaps, in an indication of her empowered status, she is able to hit her ex-husband Reep, when he appears to threaten her peace. When she says: “You watch out for the chickens. They been heated up for so long, they’re mean” (81), she is in a way highlighting the plight of the Native Americans who have been confined to reservations and have lost access to their heritage and culture. This would explain the culture of violence, which eventually consumes Titomo’s life.

One of the ways in which Native American women maintained the life and stability of their people was by bearing responsibility for preserving and using the oral tradition. In fact, in many tribal systems, the ceremonial and ritual aspects of the oral tradition rested on female power (Gunn Allen 205) and hence, women were considered sacred. Glancy highlights the link between the oral tradition and the cultural sovereignty of people in her essay “The Nail-Down of Oral Tradition”. She says, “Oral tradition

carries the fire, the spirit of the people. It's an invisible library. A personal and tribal identity. Without the definition of inner life that oral tradition gives, our people are open to a sense of purposelessness" (*Claiming Breath* 103). In *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*, the Grandmother describes women as the "carriers of our stories and histories" (14). In *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, Berta locates stories as the sources of love (35). In *The Truth Teller*, the Indian Woman says: "Truth is what we hear in our stories" (265). In the *Mother of Mosquitos*, stories are responsible for convincing the Woman about the underwater forest where she can find the driftwood.

Explaining the centrality of the individual voice to such a tradition, Glancy states in *The Cold-and-Hunger Dance*, "According to the oral tradition, I could speak with the trail of voices. I could talk with my own voice, and the way of my words could change the structure of the story. I could speak indirectly if I wanted to; talking about one thing while meaning another" (2). This explains the differing version of some stories and plays like *Segwohi* and *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*. The differing versions appear because the act of storying itself becomes an act of "gathering many voices to tell a story in many different ways" (*The Cold and the Hunger Dance* 9). Such differing versions necessarily involve perceptions which alter the consciousness of people, as is evidenced in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*.

Glancy discusses another aspect of the oral tradition in her collection of essays, *The West Pole*. The oral tradition derives its power precisely from a responsible use of words, which had to be guarded. Hence, she says: "What you said could last for generations. Therefore you guarded your words. You made them count in the oral

tradition. You spoke them responsibly. You kept in mind what the speaker says affects the speaker as much as the spoken to” (67).

From this perspective, the oral tradition in Glancy’s plays works as an “invented tradition” (Krupat, *The Turn to the Native* 37). Though tribal stories and the practice of storytelling are central to her work, they function more as a context and hence bear influence on empowering her women. As a result of such an exercise, the following aspects of the storying process are obvious in Glancy’s plays: incorporation of the narrative storytelling into the dramatic action; multivocal authenticity giving way to a communal truth that must be constructed by actors and viewers beyond the world of the play (Stanlake 156); dramatization of the fluid boundaries between the past, the present and the future through an achronological rendering of time; and presenting alternate versions of history which serve to act as sources for empowerment.

Glancy incorporates the audience aspect of storytelling into the dramatic action, as is evidenced in the plays *The Woman Who Was a Red Deer* and *The Lesser Wars*. In the preface to *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*, Glancy says that her intention was to capture the story not with a linear construct of conflict/resolution. She rather wanted to capture the story moving “like rain in a windshield. Between differing and unreliable experiences” (4). Hence, the story of the sighting of the Ahw’uste is incorporated into a monologue/dialogue mode. The primary audience for this story(s) is the Girl, who sometimes intrudes into the dramatic action of the play with her questions. Such questions force both the Grandmother and the Girl to reassess their modes of belief in the Ahw’uste. For example, in the following conversation, we can see how the process of assigning meaning to the Ahw’uste becomes a collaborative effort:

GIRL. Have you heard of the Ahw'uste?

GRANDMOTHER. I have, but I've forgotten.

GIRL. They said they fed her.

GRANDMOTHER. Yes, they did.

GIRL. What was she?

GRANDMOTHER. I don't know.

GIRL. A deer?

GRANDMOTHER. Yes, a deer. A small deer.

GIRL. She lived in the house, didn't she?

GRANDMOTHER. Yes, she did. She was small. (3)

It can be observed that the construction of the meaning of Ahw'uste becomes a collaborative exercise, with the Girl supplying the relevant information to which the Grandmother adds further details based on her own encounters with the myth. On the face of it, such exchanges seem to involve facts and perceptions. However, it can also be sensed that, albeit the difference in their ages, the Grandmother and the Girl are trying to establish points of connection, which will in turn function as a source of cultural empowerment. Hence, the necessary drama is created through the interrogative model of searching for answers.

The monologues express the frustrations which the characters experience with the myth of the Ahw'uste. For example, the Girl confesses her mistake of believing that a "dude on the highway" would be her liberating spirit. The Grandmother confesses that the spirits did not always help out in her life. Hence, the reference to the spirit deer is wound with irony. Though much of the dramatic action is sourced from the contexts in

which the myth is invoked, the contexts themselves work in the background, leaving the ground for the power play to operate between the Grandmother and the Girl.

Glancy uses the Coyote tradition of the Native American stories in *The Lesser Wars* to portray the contradictions experienced by Tecoyo regarding her sense of identity. In addition to this tradition, the story of Columbus which operates in the background defines much of Tecoyo's ironical responses to the situations dealing with relationships and her impending hysterectomy. In fact, Glancy strikes at a comparison between Columbus' journey to the New World and Tecoyo's journey towards barrenness. Tecoyo describes his journey towards the New World as his "vision quest in the wilderness of the waves" (156). Hinting at a correlation of the ambiguities, doubts and confusion that must have assailed Columbus on such a voyage, she describes such a vision quest as a "roller-coaster ride". However, she also manages to approximate herself to the identity of a seeker in search of something, when she says, "This's MY story" (156).

In a sense, the figure of Columbus works as a point of connection, typified by the longing to belong to something despite the sense of marginalization which engulfs the characters in the play. While describing Columbus as the "first feminist", Glancy states that he is the forerunner, archetype of the woman who has shed her boundaries. (*The West Pole* 120) In that sense, he becomes a useful model for Tecoyo, who parallels her journey towards becoming the Warrhameh to his journey towards the discovery of the East. Since Columbus wanted to explore beyond what was considered in those days to be the edge of the earth, Tecoyo finds a suitable objective correlative in the figure of Columbus, especially since such an exercise holds a lot of implications for questions regarding faith and spirituality. In a way, her hysterectomy can also be considered as her

willingness to take risk with her child-bearing abilities, and its attendant implications on questions regarding spirituality.

But such a journey is fraught with its own ironies. Columbus' discovery meant that the Old Land was wiped out by disease, dissolution and the loss of the cultural and spiritual elements of life. (*The West Pole* 121) Similarly, Tecoyo's quest for love and identity in a relationship has led her to a denial of her own identity, symbolized by the final fall of the guillotine. (*The Lesser Wars* 182) In such a context, the trickster story of maiming one's self actually functions as a source of empowerment because the play is then pushed into the subconscious mode as we realize that Coytoe and Tecoyo are two aspects of the same personality.

One of the aspects discussed by Stanlake, with reference to Native American theatre, is the presence of a multivocal authenticity which gives way to a communal truth that must be constructed by actors and viewers beyond the world of the play (156). This is apparent through the gathering of various, and often contradictory perspectives expressed through Native stories. Glancy moves a step forward in search of a communal truth which would empower her women characters and tries to integrate diverse perspectives on stories drawn from other cultures and religions as well. For instance, there is only one voice that operates as the narrator in *The Toad Should Have a Bite*. The narrator is a single woman in her fifties, who is on a trip to China. However, the multivocal authenticity operates in terms of the variations in the story of Chang'e, which give way to the idea that meaning is constructed by the viewer or the person experiencing the event. Hence, the process of connecting to the spiritual becomes an insurgent act of cultural translation because the subjects involved have their own personalized method of

responding to the idea of subjugation and control. Such a position adopted by the author is in tune with the idea of “conflation of perspectives” since it engenders a plurality of meaning, and hence implies a movement to a vantage position of understanding. The play begins with the following lines: “There’s no writing on the Great Wall of China. The Wall of China has no graffiti. This is my writing on the wall” (*The Toad* 294).

The Great Wall of China becomes a dynamic image which operates both as a historical construct and a metaphor with various levels of signification implying security and subjugation. The first two lines indicate the position held by authority whereas the third line indicates how the author has made inroads into that position, faintly hinting at the idea of colonial subjugation. Such a stand is further substantiated by the lines that follow: “Over the years, peasants have taken stones from the Wall to build their houses and outbuildings, their own little walls” (sic) (194).

The revolt by the marginalised peasants against the idea of authority and control is indicated by the act of appropriating parts of the Wall to build individual domiciles thereby implying that creation becomes an insurgent act. By extension, creation of meaning as well becomes an insurgent act. The author narrates the story of Chang’e who had been separated from her husband through the pill of immortality. The story that the tour guide narrates becomes a perfect objective correlative for the narrator’s status as a single woman. She says, ‘I thought about the life I live on the moon – when I am riding on a tour bus in China full of people in evening traffic on the longest street, named Everlasting Peace’ (195). This perspective integrates the aspect of empowerment in the sense that the narrator doesn’t see the need to exist within the confines of a relationship. It is a matter of personal choice, a point that is further illustrated by the extended

correlation of Chang'e to Eve. Both had chosen not to seek the paradise, but their own will which is not circumscribed by patriarchal notions of control. So Chang'e by taking the pill of immortality and Eve by choosing to partake of the forbidden fruit, were in a sense, role models for empowerment of women.

Into this matrix, the narrator introduces the voice of the archer Hou Yi, who had earned the pill of immortality by shooting the ten suns. According to the story, he often stood looking at the moon, under the assumption that Chang'e had gone to seek her own world. The narrator's voice correlates this to the idea of love when she compares love to a forbidden city where no one should be allowed. Hence, it is difficult to guess whether Hou Yi longed for his wife or for the immortality that had been promised to him. Just like in the Christian story of Eve, Chang'e is assigned the negative role of partaking of the fruit of immortality. However, in a marginalised context unlike Adam and Eve, Hou Yi and Chang'e are condemned to a life of loneliness precisely because they choose to exercise their choice.

Hence, there are four voices operating in the story, as it appears in the play – the voice of the tour guide, the voice of the narrator, the voice of Chang'e (representative woman) and the voice of Hou Yi (representative man). The communal truth that emerges from the powerplay can be discerned from the attempts of the narrator to engender points of connection by overriding those aspects which create the sense of loneliness in the first place. At a communal level, she refers to the Chinese practice of making small white cakes on the night of the Autumn Festival. While extending the persona of Chang'e to encompass the whole moon, she also talks about the similarities between the toad and the

moon. She says, “The toad is another name for the moon – because the full moon is speckled or mottled as a toad’s back” (199).

It is only through a ritual act of the toad partaking of the cakes that points of connection can be established between Chang’e and the world. In an act infused with ritual and cultural meaning, the narrator introduces a new voice, that of the marginalised woman who has often been silenced, through the practice of binding her feet with lily shoes and who has often been condemned to a life of cruelty, hard work and misery. (195)

The dramatization of fluid boundaries is essentially typified by the presence of characters who are able to look beyond boundaries, and an achronological rendering of time so that the narrative pattern in the play does not have a clear beginning, middle or an end. Lody in *Bull Star*, is an example of a character who is able to look beyond boundaries. There are enough hints provided to suggest that she had suffered child abuse at the hands of her alcoholic mother (162), which must have had a significant impact on her conception of motherhood. However, the meaning of abuse assumes new dimensions, when Jack convinces Cicero to use Lody for “spooking” Cree’s father (164). Though Cicero initially resists the idea, he plays along, making inroads into Lody’s world of Baby Hare, Taurus and the stars. He tries to convince her by equalizing the image of the stars with the selling of the depot. This is because of the assumption that she is probably retarded, and would understand the act of deceit only in terms of the story of the stars and the Bull Star which she has woven for her own survival. However, as Cicero admits, Lody speaks as if she has the right sense to understand the economic insecurities which Jack and Cree are facing. She has empowered herself with the virtue of understanding,

though she weaves the story about Baby Hare and the Bull Star for her own survival. In that sense, she has crossed the boundary between the reality and the make-believe by allowing for a conflation of perspectives between both the worlds.

The achronological rendering of time is sourced in the story weaving tradition which was a standard strategy while performing oral narratives.⁸ By making time achronological in her plays, Glancy does not rely on conflict, crisis and resolution, but rather on the possibilities of relating events and experiences to one another. (Gunn Allen, 59) This paves the way for the spiritual empowerment of the women by releasing a network of possibilities for interconnection between the events, experiences and perceptions. For example, Birgit Dawes comments that working with “mixed media” on seven textual “movable plates”, while trying to capture the image of rain on a windshield, reflects the multidimensionality of aesthetic experience in *Jump Kiss* (87). The play seems to have been set in a state of suspended animation, enabling the narrative voice to indulge in a “recovery of events and experiences and relationships for the purpose of understanding what has passed” (87). There is no clear indication about the time aspect, though it is possible to figure out that the narrative voice belongs to a single, middle-aged woman (87).

Such a condition of achronological sense of time permits the reading of the play on various levels. While at one level, it can be read as an exploration of spiritual crisis in the face of sociocultural encounters engendered by the colonial contact, it can also be read as a search for the definition of self in terms of relationships. The play can be performed in any order of the sections, since there is no perceptible conflict or confrontation that holds the play at the centre.

A similar strategy is also at work in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* and *Mother of Mosquitos*, where chronological sense of action is conspicuous by its absence. Instead, the sense of time in the plays is ordered more by a series of connections and interconnections between the personal and the spiritual, within the framework of the sociocultural context in which the characters are placed. While the *Mother of Mosquitos* deals with the construction of the idea of the mosquito mask at a metaphorical level, the women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, are engaged in a deep rumination of their own migratory status, as evinced by their locational instability. We can conclude that the achronological sense of time functions more in a locational sense, sometimes permitting the characters to make precisely those connections which would serve as a source of creative empowerment.

Glancy once stated that she conceives of history as an ‘unrolling of many scrolls, going back and receiving what was there but had not a voice’ (*Conversation 7*). The Native American woman in Glancy’s plays has been doubly silenced by years spent in the reservation and the reformatory, and the sustained suppression in the sociocultural context. She often embarks on a journey to go back and retrieve “what was there but had not a voice”. Her voice remains instrumental in the formation of an alternate history which is a significant process of cultural and religious empowerment. While this has a due impact on the cultural persistence often displayed by Glancy’s women characters, history becomes a localized and personalized construct thereby engendering a transformation from “history” to “his/her story”. Therefore, the oral stories become crucial markers for the creation of the alternate history which accommodates the idea of survivance. For example, in *The Truth Teller*, the Indian Woman questions her husband

‘How can anyone survive without stories?’ (259) In *The Lesser Wars*, Tecoyo is a school teacher who manages to conflate the ideas of “history” and “my story”. She says: ‘Let me tell my story, I teach history remember?’ (156) Her story is intertwined with the vision quest of Columbus who, in her conception of things, had engaged on a vision quest to find a new world. This corresponds to her idea of finding a new world in her alternative identity as the barren ‘Warrhameh.’ Within such a comparison, the three ships in search of the new world correspond to three directions in search of the fourth, typified in turn by the movements of the fox trot, which silently exerts a metaphorical import in the background. Just like how Columbus had taken risk with his vision of the new world, Tecoyo has to take risk in her new relationship with Coytoe. So her story of her lesser wars with Coytoe corresponds to the larger history of Columbus’ voyage to the Americas, albeit infused with the vision-quest of a new world.

The Truth Teller, set in Circa 1800, shows the Indian Woman engaging in the processes of cultural persistence, when she insists that her half-breed husband should dream a name for their baby. Her attitude towards the colonizers is typified by her constant questioning of her husband who works for them. She asks him, “How can you guide these white soldiers? It’s like leading a storm to our doors” (257). On one hand she is able to visualize the tragic vision of the future, engendered by cultural contact, especially when she is told that the colonizers don’t talk to their ancestors, and that they work their way around their land with the limited idea of maps. These are the parameters which reflect that the colonizers do not have a vision. She emerges as a figure of cultural persistence, when she insists that her husband dream a name for her son, while acknowledging the reality that her son may have to walk the way between the two worlds

– his inherited world and the world of the colonizers. The Indian Woman conceives of stories as the perfect propagators of cultural persistence. She emerges as the powerful woman, who scripts her own voice, against a larger history of cultural penetration by the colonizers.

From the above discussion, we can discern that the journey towards “ani-yun-wiyu”, in Glancy’s plays is a spiritually intense quest, often influenced by the sociocultural contradictions which define the locational space of Glancy’s characters. Given their marginalised location, the significant position occupied by Glancy’s women characters emerges from their responses to the sociocultural encounters. Such responses are contingent on their spirit of survival which is in turn determined by their ability to connect the personal and the spiritual. Glancy’s women are powerful in their own right, because the dramatist rarely assigns a victimized status to them.⁹ Right from Sweet Potato in *Weebjob* who asserts her right to marry a man of her choice, to the empowered narrative voice in *The Toad Should Have a Bite*, women exercise a choice, or participate in rituals and storying towards the creation of a personalized sense of meaning. We witness them as empowered individuals rather than victimized subjects. In the process, they discover their voice, albeit their marginalised status. When considered in this light, Glancy’s methodology of locating her women characters invites a comparison with the work of the other American women playwrights, most of them who had similar concerns of empowering their women characters with the knowledge of culture, history and sometimes spirituality as well, an aspect which will be discussed in the next chapter.

Notes

1. Associated with the second and the third waves of feminism, possible reason for the popularity of feminist theatre groups.
2. This enables us to see identity not as an absolute or an essence, but as a fluid site which can be understood differently depending on its vantage point of formations and functions.
3. Bhabha opines that the borderline work of culture demands an encounter with newness which is not a part of the continuum of the past and the present. Such works renew the past, refiguring it as a contingent in-between space, which innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. (*The Location of Culture* 10)
4. Old Spider Woman, Corn Woman and Thought Woman are aspects of what Gunn Allen describes as the “quintessential spirit...that pervades everything” (*The Sacred Hoop* 13). The implication is clearly on the active role played by the Woman in the process of creation. Such descriptions ensure that the role of women is not restricted to reproductive aspects alone but also to the preservation of right balance and harmony.
5. Allen raises this point in *The Sacred Hoop* (44).
6. Glancy refers to the story of the Babylonian king Neduchadnezzar, who commended himself on the beauty of his city Babylon. According to the Bible, he was struck down by the Lord and cursed to live like an animal for seven years.

7. According to a Senecan legend, when stunned with pain, the wren had transformed into a man to avoid capture.

8. There is a spiritual angle to the achronological aspect of time. Gunn Allen says in her essay 'The Ceremonial Motion of Indian Time' that while chronological time structuring promotes and supports an industrial time sense with its attendant implications, the achronological sense of time results from tribal beliefs about the nature of reality and beliefs based on ceremonial understandings (149).

9. Exception to this is *Halfact* where there is enough suggested in the play to conclude that the Girl has been and will continue to be abused.

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Chapter 5

The Comparisons and Controversies

This study makes it possible to trace out three strains of development in Glancy's plays, which can be used as points of comparison with other American women playwrights. In a way, these aspects are manifest in the critical terms "culture" – which often sources and organizes the structural elements of the play; "conflict" – which initiates and develops the movement in the plays; "social fabric" – which suggests an implicit dynamism that permits the women characters to emerge as empowered individuals. It becomes significant for this study to discuss how the women playwrights used this critical framework with reference to the processes of playwriting.

In addition to these, this chapter will also attempt to explore certain significant debates that are crucial while considering Diane Glancy as a mixed breed Native American woman playwright. Glancy's works have invited debates on three counts – the first being her claim to her heritage, the second being the thematic ambiguities which seem to be the characteristic content of her plays and the third being her engagement with Christianity which, in the opinion of a few, approximates to an assimilation of colonial culture.

The common aspect between Diane Glancy and playwrights like Marsha Norman, Anna Deavere Smith and Wendy Wasserstein is that they were all socially conscious dramatists, who were concerned with the sociocultural representations of women. There is a valid justification for locating Glancy's plays against their plays, especially with reference to the three critical terms of reference.

In the case of Marsha Norman, culture makes its appearance in the form of the images to which her characters are forced to subscribe. These images also become the defining constructs through which they access their past. Hence, the retrospective narration at work is often through a single image or a gesture which enables a movement into the past. *Getting Out*, *'night Mother* are representative of such models, wherein conversations are contingent on making some points of connection with the past. It is precisely through such processes of making connections that Norman uses memory to ensure that the realism in her plays is not a "reworked version of old realism" (Demastes 125). Though the structure of her plays, which are dependent on memory may seem to be realistic, the trajectories of the process of remembrance are often chaotic and indicate a non-linear pattern of recollection. Her plays are often contingent on creating a conflicting play of voices precisely through the act of recollection.

This can be illustrated with reference *Getting Out*. For most of the play, Arlie tends to subscribe to the 'violent' image which the society has set for her. But when she is isolated and the chaplain conjures an image of a serene Arlene, she starts following the socially acceptable norms. However, the presence of Arlene becomes a temporary stay because, even after being released, she is still considered a prostitute and unfit to raise her son. Since there is no obvious resolution, Arlie/Arlene continue to remain in tensional

balance, as hinted by the schizophrenic aspect of their personalities. This is specifically represented in the conclusion of the play, when Arlene remembers a childhood memory and Arlie makes her presence felt (*Four Plays* 56).

Therefore, it is the statements or words used in the present which initiate the mode of retrospective narration. However, in a departure from the narrative mode, we see the actual representations of those moments in the past entirely in the manner in which Arlie remembers. For example, a query from Bennie about her future provokes Arlie to make her appearance and there is a depiction of the manner in which Arlie had opened fire in order to escape from the prison (11).

In '*Night Mother*, while Norman uses conversation as a frame for breaking illusions, it is Jessie's epilepsy which functions as a defining image, dominating not only the exchanges but also the retreat into the past. As the mother struggles towards a reconciliation of the fact that she cannot make her daughter change her mind, the stories of how she might have probably contributed to her daughter's ailment are revealed. Her disease had been kept a secret and in retrospect, Jessie feels that she should have been told about her epileptic fits. But she manages to put things in perspective when she says: "It's just a sickness, not a curse. Epilepsy doesn't mean anything. It just is" (*Night, Mother*⁷¹). However, the society that surrounds Jessie had assigned damaging connotations to the ailment itself thereby pushing her into a zone of seclusion and abandonment. So in a way, it is the same trajectory at work again – subscription to an image, living in hope and the final decision when both the image and the illusion provided by the hope fail. Hence, the past, though recollected in a non-linear manner, becomes a significant and a conscious justification for the act of suicide in the present.

Wasserstein's plays show women engaged on a quest for identities in a world where values are suspect and a woman's success is determined by her capacity to "have-it-all". On this quest, much of their identity is shaped by their relationships, which ironically, remain tenuous. There are shards of friendship, promises of company, and assurances of not being left alone. But as these women see time and again, they are left stranded by those very ideologies in which they believe in. In such a scenario, as much as they may attempt at bonding, their relationships remain tenuous.

We can discern a movement from an experimental episodic structure to a traditional beginning-middle-end play. For example, *Uncommon Women and Others* has an episodic narrative, with flashback including the aspect of retrospective narration, whereas *An American Daughter* adheres to the structurally consistent pattern. By the time Wasserstein wrote plays like *An American Daughter* and *Third*, the futility of feminist collectives and the necessity of 'making it alone' are more discernible. The college graduates of *Uncommon Women* are no longer sitting together and reminiscing what has been and what is to be, and believing that they are going to be incredible by the time they are forty. Lyssa and Laurie have reached a vantage point where they understand that being 'incredible' is a myth.

Of particular significance is also the manner of telling the story. In *Uncommon Women and Others*, there is the voiceover of the man who explains the ideals of Mount Holyoke. At the beginning of the play, he says:

The college produces women who are persons in their own right:

Uncommon Women who as individuals have the personal dignity that comes with intelligence, competence, flexibility, maturity, and a sense of

responsibility. This can happen without loss of gaiety, charm or femininity. (*The Heidi Chronicles and Other Plays* 7)

By the time we reach the final scene, a woman takes over, explaining the reality of the situation: “Women still encounter overwhelming obstacles to achievement and recognition despite gradual abolition of legal and political disabilities. Society has trained women from childhood to accept a limited set of options and restricted levels of aspirations” (67-68).

Also there is the device of the present leading to the past. Some chance remark or gesture during the present conversation takes the uncommon women back to their college days. For example, the first scene in the first act ends with all of them clinking glasses and Samantha saying that she is going to make an announcement “like at Mount Holyoke”. To Holly however, Holyoke in some way represented some kind of shackling and so she feels disturbed. Therefore, in the following scene Mrs. Plumm explains the institution of the tea ceremony at Holyoke. In *The Heidi Chronicles*, Wasserstein uses the framework of an art lecture to talk about Heidi’s own development. For example, Heidi ends her lecture in the prologue saying:

As for Mrs Lily Martin Spencer and ‘We Both Must Fade,’ frankly, this painting has always reminded me of me at one of those horrible high-school dances. And you sort of want to dance, and you sort of want to go home, and you sort of don’t know what you want. So you hang around, a fading rose in an exquisitely detailed dress, waiting to see what might happen (161).

That was precisely what Heidi Holland was trying to do twenty four years earlier in a high school dance with the Shoop-Shoop song playing in the background. She also remembers this song in the penultimate scene when she understands that her act of going away may actually imply that her generation did commit errors. In a way, she is back at the same location, wherein her acquired knowledge of feminist sensibilities becomes inadequate to negotiate her present sociocultural ambivalence.

The common aspect of the characters in the plays of Wendy Wasserstein, Marsha Norman and Diane Glancy is that they are brought into conflict with situations which forces them to reassess and reevaluate what they have been told or what they have understood about their identity as women in a society. On the other hand, Smith's plays are the narratives of the responses of a community to an event that had the effect of imploding the constituent structure of the society from within and laying bare the paradoxes lying at its core. The canvas moves to a macro perspective as Smith tries to capture at the essence of "identity in motion" and what it implies with reference to the larger idea of "American character", and by extension, the rapidly evolving definitions of culture.

The texts of *Fires in the Mirror* and *Twilight: Los Angeles* are sourced from the interviews conducted by Anna Deavere Smith with people who were related in some way or the other to the social disturbances. *Fires* is sourced in the Crown Heights riots and *Twilight* is sourced in the riots following the acquittal of the officers accused of beating up Rodney King. While Smith offers a description of the settings of the interview and a brief introduction to the characters, there are absolutely no indications about the questions being asked. Further, these plays are divided into sections and titled by the

most relevant phrase that probably describes the perspective that readers have to adopt while considering those characters. An illustration in point would be the “Badge of Courage” narrative in *Twilight* where the badge of the firefighters becomes a metaphor for the conflicting positions between practical responsibilities and the idea of heroism as suggested by the badge itself. The final effect is that of a montage of various narratives, seemingly at variance with each other.

Smith’s plays were initially meant for the audience who were directly related to the riots. In some ways, she approached the dimensions of documentary theatre but there were significant variations. The very act of choosing and editing established the authorial control. And the audience which was supposed to be directly involved by being a part of the whole issue is led carefully by the author amidst the maze of narratives. For example in *Fires*, we get the perspectives on identity and the shapes it assumes in the mental and cultural make up of the people in various sections before the actual Crown Heights section. So by the time the reader reaches this point in the text, he has already gained the perspectives that warn him about the necessity of holding up a suitable mirror(s) to the event.

Such arrested moments of removed recollections definitely have an impact on the role played by memory, especially when we correlate Smith’s use of this device with the other playwrights under consideration. Memory as it functions in the plays of Marsha Norman, Wendy Wasserstein and Diane Glancy represents more of a conscious/unconscious attempt by the characters to remember what has happened in the past and correlate it to the present. The process of correlation happens in the context of the conflicts that they face between their professed beliefs and the dominant patterns of

social thought. An example that can be cited here is that of Jessie in *'Night Mother* or Heidi in *The Heidi Chronicles*. But in the case of Smith's plays, the act of remembering is influenced by a sufficient distancing from the specific event both in terms of time and perspective. The characters try to remember either the event, or the understanding that they had of the event in trying to make sense of the event itself. Especially in the absence of traditional elements of a play like plot and action, memory functions in a freewheeling manner leading to a questioning of the very act of choosing what to remember and the justification behind the remembrances. For example, the perspective that is brought to Alex Haley's *Roots* by Leonard Jeffries in *Fires* sounds like an act of washing dirty linen. But it is also symptomatic of the commercialization of what was supposed to be the African search for roots and the consequent adaptation of the original story to commercial demands. Leonard Jeffries says:

After two weeks they got tied of me, sat me down
and said, "Dr Jeffries," at lunch,
but we just bought the rights to the book *Roots*
and we are under no obligation to maintain the integrity of
The book
and we certainly don't have to deal with the truth of Black history." (55)

Though her plays seem to have a documentary nature about them, it is also possible to discern the shamanistic role played by the narrator, especially with reference to the choice of the characters and the parts of the stories which are finally told. The keyword here is "invoke" which indicates a subjective decision by the narrator to decide which story has to be narrated and which perspective has to be presented, just like how

the traditional shamans invoked spirits. While Smith adopts a ritualistic mode of narration, she adapts it to the frame of an interview and documentary drama to capture the divergent voices that are heard in the context of the racial issues which she discusses. In the process, it becomes obvious that identity in her plays assumes a collective aspect, with a multiplicity of voices characterizing its movement.

On the other hand, the cultural aspect of Glancy's plays can be gleaned in the complex amalgam between the personal and the generational memory. Since much of Glancy's dramatic emphasis lies in capturing the marginalised voices in a fragmented context, memory often works as a dominant force in sourcing of the plays. In her essay "From Salvage to Selvage: The Restoration of What is Left", Glancy says:

I borrow another term from physics: recessional velocity, which is the outward movement of the universe, the acceleration of it, especially the outermost edges. I feel the edges of the native past moving quickly away. I want to capture it on stage before it is gone. This for me is the exploration of the structure or construct of native theater. (*Writings* 17)

"Recessional velocity", a term from Astronomy, may very well refer to the manner in which Glancy uses memory to source her plays. The process of transformation of memories into stories is accompanied by a sense of motion, a choice of stories and points of view. When applied in the literary sense, it implies that the recollected narratives and perspectives are dictated more by nature and chance rather than tradition or creed. A similar process is often at work in Glancy's plays where a chance encounter or a passing recollection engenders the concatenation necessary for the formation of the

play. In such a process, memory plays a defining role by creating the necessary connections between the past and the present. Glancy says in *Claiming Breath* (1992):

I want to explore my memories & their relational aspects to the present. I was born between two heritages & I want to explore that empty space, that place-between-2-places, that walk-in-2-worlds. I want to do it in a new way. (4)

“Memories” as observed in Glancy’s plays, are actually a complex amalgam of the personal and the generational strands. In an interview to Jennifer Andrews, Glancy talks about the racial, generational memory, a “spirit DNA” that brings the works into line with history and culture. In her case, much of her generational memory is influenced by travel and sociocultural history. While landscape and generational history contribute to the plurality of voices, they also function as the mystical constructs through which the dramatist can access the voices of her ancestors and locate herself in the marginal space between the cultures. Such a pattern can be observed in her plays. For example, with reference to *Stick Horse* (1997) she says, “I guess in the end, the play is in the memory of my father who didn’t drink and told me to do the same” (143).

After having acknowledged that alcoholism affects nearly 90% of Native Americans, she locates a personalized voice in the play implying that memory in this case is both personal and generational. The dysfunctional aspect of family life, as portrayed in the play, bears some correlation to Glancy’s own marital experiences. For instance, she admits that one of the reasons for the breakdown of her marriage was her husband’s addiction to alcohol (*Claiming Breath* 52). The autobiographical aspect of Glancy’s plays emerges when the aspects and incidents are correlated with other relevant pieces of

information. Such references, while distorting the boundaries between the personal and the theatrical, are consistent with the aspect of locational revisioning of the self, which is an intended outcome of her theatre.

When there is clear indication of a mismatch between individual expectation and the demands of the sociocultural contexts in which characters are placed, conflicts operate in the plays of these women playwrights. In Norman's *Getting Out*, such a pattern can be substantiated with the systematic abuse that Arlie has suffered at the hands of her family and the society which has labeled her as 'violent' and her consequent separation from her child. Similarly, Jessie in *Night Mother* has suffered seclusion and abandonment because of the connotations attached to epilepsy. In the case of Wasserstein's plays, it is the limited tenability of the ideals of feminist movement which bring the conflicts to the fore. While the "uncommon women" in *Uncommon Women and Others* are forced to defer their dreams, Janie in *Isn't It Romantic* is forced to recognize that she has made her choice on an idea that did not exist anymore, because she feels stranded by Harriet. For a relationship in which both equally proclaimed that there was nothing wrong in being alone, Harriet gets engaged whereas Janie dumps her boyfriend. And both the acts are not arbitrary. Janie goes on a learning curve of discovery to realize that there is more to life than getting engaged to a Jewish doctor and struggle to fit in. Harriet goes on a learning curve of recognition to understand that life is a negotiation and so she should grab the chance for survival.

While the conflicts in Norman's and Wasserstein's plays function at the level of an individual, conflicts in those of Anna Deavere Smith's and Glancy's plays function at the level of the community, but with a difference. In the case of Smith's plays, the

dominant incidents of a Black boy being run over by the Jewish motorcade, the Jewish scholar Yankel Rosenbaum being stabbed in a seeming act of retaliation and the beating up of Rodney King function as catalysts which enhanced the violent responses of the community to what they thought was a threat to their modes of living. For the most part the conflicts are racial, communal and institutional. In the case of *Fires*, the conflict operates on the Blacks versus Hasidic Jews equation, though there are hints about the divisive strands in the Blacks itself. In the section ‘Hair’, the anonymous girl does make a distinction between the Puerto Ricans and the girls from the Dominican Republic in terms of their tendency to ‘bite off’ – assuming an aspect of another community’s identity in order to fit in. She says:

You don’t know what that means?Biting off?

Like biting off somebody’s clothes.

Like cop, following?

and last year they used to have a lot of girls like that.

They come to school with a style, right?

And if they see another girl with that style?

“Oh my gosh look at her.”

“What she think she is?”

“She trying to bite off of me in some way!” (28)

Conflicts also arise from a tension between natural identity, which can be considered as that arising from the roots of the community or race, and accrued identity. An excellent illustration of this is the Anonymous Young Man 2 – Bad Boy in *Fires* who explicates the fine distinctions between being an “atha-lete” and being a “bad boy”, both

functioning as instances of accrued identity. While the “atha-lete” is not interested in stabbing people because “it’s not in his mind to stab, to just jump into somethin’ that he has no idea about...” (*Fires* 108), a “bad boy” is given to selling drugs and robbing people. The political aspect of such a description arises when the boy states: “It’s a big difference. Like, mostly the Black youth in Crown Heights have two things to do – either DJ or be a bad boy, right?” (109)

Another instance of this accrued identity can also be seen at work in *Twilight*, in a section called “Godzilla”. Here, an anonymous young man, who is a Hollywood agent, looks at the White upper middle class as victims of generic guilt. On hearing the news of the acquittal of the officers accused in the Rodney King case and the consequent riots, they had reacted as if they were fleeing from a Godzilla, though there had been no immediate danger of them becoming the victims of the riots. On one level “Godzilla” does imply a monstrous dehumanization of the concept of identity, mostly fuelled by the fears of a community identified as the “White upper middle class”. Even in the section called “The Beverly Hills Hotel”, Elaine Young, looks upon the Polo Lounge as a place of safety, whereas the public reaction to such a statement found it insensitive on her part to lodge herself in an upper class lounge.

The conflict at the institutional level happens in a very limited manner in *Fires*. It manifests in the legal sanction given to the Rabbi’s motorcade to pass through the streets at high speed and the supposed lack of medical attention to Yankel Rosenbaum. It is more clearly delineated in *Twilight*, where it operates on a racial principle. Blacks and Whites are treated differently by the police officers who don’t mind treating a Black person like a criminal, though he happens to be educated at Harvard or happens to be a

partner in a law firm. But a deeper divisive force seems to lie within the department itself where there happens to be no clear policy on the manner in which controls are to be exercised on people. Another manner in which this had been delineated is through the reaction of the jurors who had returned the verdict of “not guilty” and thereby sparked the riots. As one of the jurors admits, though the law stipulates that the names of the jurors should have been held in confidence for a certain period of time, they were revealed to the public by a seemingly biased judge thereby making them the scourge of public anger.

It can be concluded that the movement in the plays happens due to the tension between perceived patterns of thought and dominant ideas on race and ethnicity which result in a tensional explosion of violence. The responses of the community, as represented by individuals in the plays, reveal the tensional aspects of such conflicts. For example in *Fires*, the Lubavitcher woman in “Static” pretends that she is dumb enough not to know the switch to reduce the volume settings on her radio and has to ask a Black boy to do the job for her, when the reality is that the rules of her religion do not permit her to touch an electronic device. Obviously the boundaries that have been created between the two communities do not permit her to explain the situation to the Black boy whose attitude is informed by this lack of information. And a perception like George C. Wolfe’s which says that Blackness does not exist in relationship to whiteness results in riots when there are such tensional points of interaction between the two communities. When Aaron M Bernstein continues to talk about mirrors that reflect and distort, it can be discerned that an inorganic combination of race and ethnicities are responsible for the deep divisiveness at the core of what constitutes as ‘American character’ and the consequent “Fires” in the form of unrestrained violence.

In the case of Glancy's plays, conflicts are sourced in the sociocultural collisions experienced by her characters in a dislocated and a fragmented context, especially from a postcolonial point of view. Hence, the individual conflicts become generational in context. It is not difficult to find characters who mourn the loss of culture in their relocated context. Examples include Segwohi in *Segwohi*, and Henry in *The Best Fancy Dancer*. Her characters experience a fundamental disconnect in terms of their cultural standpoint, or religious affiliations, or gender based oppositions, aspects that have been discussed in the third and the fourth chapter of this study. Glancy's position as a socially conscious playwright is significantly different from that of Marsha Norman, Anna Deavere Smith and Wendy Wasserstein, because she sees conflict in her plays as a perfect springboard from which she can explore the larger issues like the tenability of myths, legends and the operation of oral traditions in a translocated context. In this sense, her work represents a point of departure from that of the other women playwrights discussed.

The term "social fabric" imparts a dynamic aspect to the terms culture and conflict, implying that survival happens when characters make significant attempts at resolving the crises that engender the dramatic action necessary for the play. For example, though Arlie is able to transform into Arlene, the play reveals that this is only a tensional balance and both the aspects of Arlie/Arelene will continue to survive, without any resolution. Similarly, though in *'night Mother* Jessie's act of suicide proves to be a limited resolution because the larger issue of a problematic sense of identity has already been foregrounded in the conversation between Jessie and her mother. The voice of the woman which emerges in her plays is often captured in its ambivalence. Though Jessie

makes a significant attempt at exerting her autonomy through the very act of taking her own life, there is a negative sense of empowerment because she exerts a limited influence on her sociocultural environment. Hence, the social fabric which emerges in Norman's plays functions dynamically in a very limited sense, since her women characters find limited means of empowerment from a sociocultural point of view.

Anna Deavere Smith's open-ended plays are symptomatic of a non-resolution of issues at a larger level. Her work as a playwright was to capture the conflicting voices that are indicative of identity in motion. Hence, instead of a resolution, her plays suggest that there should be some negotiation of the boundaries imposed by factors like race and ethnicity. To lend credence to this, Smith includes the narrative of Twilight, an ex-gang member, who worked towards gang truce. Hence, the social fabric which emerges in Smith's plays is characterized by the plurality of voices, each existing in its own dimension. He says:

I am a dark individual,
and with me stuck in limbo,
I see darkness as myself.
I see the light as knowledge and the wisdom of the world
and
understanding others,
and in order for me to be a, to be a true human being,
I can't forever dwell in darkness,
I can't forever dwell in the idea,
of just identifying with people like me and understanding me

and mine. (*Twilight* 255)

In the plays of Wendy Wasserstein, we find that characters make certain definite attempts at exerting their autonomy. Examples would include those of Janie who decides to break her engagement and Heidi, who adopts a baby to complete her idea of motherhood. Characters like Lyssa in *An American Daughter* emerge as survivors in a social context wherein their acts are scrutinized and judgments are passed in the public realm. The key aspect here is that, instead of attempting to negotiate their sociocultural location, Wasserstein's women characters are content to be assigned the role of survivors with an implicit indication of altered personal relationships. They would defer their dreams, like the 'uncommon women' in *Uncommon Women and Others* rather than run the risk of trying to exert a significant pressure on their sociocultural location. Hence, the social fabric is hardly impacted by the efforts of her characters, who for the most part are alive to feminist sensibilities, but struggle when they try to make their voice heard.

It has already been established in the fourth chapter of this study that Glancy's women characters often emerge as empowered individuals precisely through their ability to exert a significant influence on their sociocultural location. This happens mainly through their recourse to myths, culture and religion through which they make attempts to connect the personal with the spiritual. Hence the social fabric which emerges in Glancy's plays functions as a site wherein healing and compassion become achievable goals. And it is through this aspect that Glancy's heritage enters the scope of her playwriting processes. She uses the "usable past" handed down by culture and history to demonstrate that it is possible for the empowered voice to exist amidst a plurality of voices.

The process of claiming heritage by authors like Diane Glancy acquires a dubious distinction, especially in the light of efforts to break the stereotyping of Native Americans in the mainstream theatre. William Yellow Robe voices these concerns when he says:

That's the reason why there is such conflict now . . . multicultural groups who are now longing to express themselves in theater are being dictated to by the mainstream structure. If a play doesn't fall within the parameters of that mainstream theater, that mainstream structure, even though it is still a valid theatrical event or expression of theater, it loses its validation, so you are invalidated right away ("Telling Stories Through the Stage" 23)

Though Robe advocates a common ground for all Native American artists, he shares a deep distrust of the mainstream theatre, and by extension, resists the idea of working with non-Native people. Such a view arises out of his firm conviction in the nationalist idea that the Native people have a right to "voice themselves and to voice their people's voice." ("Telling Stories Through the Stage" 28) He also opines that the critical positioning in plays written by non-Natives usually deals with historical aspects and the magical mystery rather than with the contemporary situation of the Natives. Hence, he views the whole idea of claiming heritage as suspect, especially in the case of a playwright like Diane Glancy.

On the other hand, Elizabeth Cook Lynn feels that literature produced by mixed-blood authors is characterized by excesses of individualism. In addition to this, she also locates a few useful expressions of resistance and opposition to colonial history with reference to the Indian-White relationship. Hence, she feels that mixed-blood authors explicitly or implicitly accommodate their literary aesthetic to the colonial ideologies

imposed by the West. This works to the detriment of generating an aesthetically consistent approach to Native American literature. She says, “Ideas, in general, according to Native American studies disciplinary definitions, are to be generated from the inside of the culture, not from the outside, looking in” (70). In fact, she terms the works of such authors as “literature of disengagement” because the writers often admit that they work in a paradigm that has been removed from the cultural influence of the Indian nation. Even in cases where the authors use specific chants or rituals, she feels that there is little attempt to “connect indigenous literary traditions to contemporary forms” because of which, the use of such devices appears to be superficial or exploitative.

Craig S Womack, while making the case for American Indian literary self-determination, argues for “native viewpoints” because he feels that the “mental means of production” with regard to the analyzing of Indian cultures have been almost exclusively owned by non-Indians. Native viewpoints, in his opinion, will ensure that Indians are not assigned the status of victims of the colonial contact. Rather, they will emerge as active agents in their history. Towards this end, he prescribes the “red stick approach” which works on the basis of the following assumptions: Indian viewpoints cohere; Indian resistance can be successful; Native critical centers are possible; working from within the nation, rather than looking toward the outside, is a legitimate way of examining literature; by subverting the literary status quo rather than being subverted *by* it constitutes a meaningful alternative (*Red on Red* 12).

Glancy’s plays have limited referencing with mainstream theatre going by the performance venues of her plays and the reading sessions which they have received. Since her focus is on identity issues involving the individual and the community,

especially in the postcolonial and the dislocated context, her work transcends the requirements of the commercial stage. Glancy's plays have been read and performed in places like universities, community houses, conferences and art centers. Her approach, though commercially unsullied, seems to be at variance with what can be described as the 'intellectual sovereignty' proposed by William Robe Yellow.

Regarding the critical positioning in her plays, it can be observed that the retreat to the past or the mythical is rarely given the cloak of a magical mystery. It is a tensional affair, sometimes occurring with patterns of transculturation aiding the conception of the entire process as a natural outcome of the tensional socio-location of her characters. An excellent illustration of such an effort would be the revisualization of the Turtle Island Myth by Weebjob in *Weebjob*, or the sightings of the deer by the Grandmother in *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*. In *Stick Horse*, Glancy deals with alcoholism, a burning issue in the context of life on the reservation. In *American Gypsy*, she looks at the issue of unemployment, which was also common amongst people living in the reservations. She deals with a similar issue in *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*. In *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, Glancy's focus is on issues related to mobility and rootlessness. Further, rarely do Glancy's characters emerge as victims or are cast in a stereotypical mode. Most of the times, her characters emerge empowered, an aspect which can be particularly located in her women characters.

Sometimes, Glancy uses terms like Indian Man or Indian Woman, to show her emphasis on the voices and not on individuals, especially in plays like *Mother of Mosquitos* and *The Truth Teller*, which operate on a metaphoric level. Further, her characters are not sketched out in their entirety since Glancy captures significant

moments which are characterized by sociocultural collisions, thereby ensuring that her plays are rarely characterized by excesses of individualism. In some plays, Glancy makes it a point to define her characters as ‘mixed-breed’ whereas in a few others, she identifies the tribes of her characters. But she does this only in a few plays like *The Truth Teller* or *Weebjob*, since the ‘mixed-breed’ or the “Mescalero Apache” status of her characters is crucial to the understanding of the colonial impact on the social and the spiritual fabric of the Native Americans, as depicted in those plays. As a playwright, Glancy tries to move away from “tribal specificity” since brokenness and fragmentation are inherent in the Native American consciousness, in spite of tribal or communal affiliations. Within such a context, her strategy is to engender survival by discovering points of connection between heritages, cultures and communities. Such survival is also contingent on enacting strategies of resistance and opposition to the received contact culture, as depicted in *Weebjob* or *The Best Fancy Dancer*. We often find her characters questioning their location and the received culture, which only opens up more avenues for ambiguities.

Though she does admit that she works in a paradigm that has been removed from the influence of the Indian nations, Glancy’s plays can rarely be characterized as “literature of disengagement”. Despite using a post colonial discourse, her subjective engagement with her plays is obvious in the sourcing itself. And when she uses particular ceremonies or devices specific to Native American cultures, her intention is to relocate the same within the present context of her characters in an attempt to connect the indigenous literary traditions to contemporary forms. For example, it can be seen that Glancy tries to accommodate the trickster discourse and the oral traditions of story-telling

to enable her plays to transcend the Western conception of the “resolution of conflict” mode of theatre.

There are limited possibilities for observing patterns of self-determination, as outlined by Womack, in Glancy’s plays. Moving away from the idea of fractured tribal theories, Glancy instead makes a case for criticism generated by Native theorists, since that would address the issue of looking at Native American arts from “within”. However, she does attempt to subvert the literary status quo in her plays, by exploring the elasticity of theatre itself, especially with reference to culture.

Culture, in Glancy’s conception, is not a monolithic construct, which works when being restricted to a particular tribe or community. As has been established before, her artistic effort is devoted more towards discovering points of connection amidst perceived differences. Further, she strongly identifies history and heritage with feeling and emotion since much of it had been withheld to her due to her mixed breed status. Hence, her methodology of claiming heritage involves an aesthetic conceptualization of the transformation of heart-felt experiences into art experiences. Glancy’s plays deal with what Robe would describe as “expression of theatre”, with the intended outcome being a kind of healing which is engendered through the discovery of points of connection between the physical and the spiritual world.

Claiming heritage assumes a controversial aspect in Glancy’s plays also because of her cultural antecedents. Glancy once stated, “There are many different borderlands. I don’t have access to what the pure Cherokee were like. I work in the borderland; the students who listen to culture walk in a borderland” (*Conversation 3*). Hence, the dramatic narrative often assumes a locational aspect, especially when she specifically

identifies her characters as belonging to a particular tribe. As she states, she uses the style of mixing and fragmenting to explore this borderland in between her two heritages. This is especially obvious in the mixing of voices and points of view in her plays. In fact, in the introduction to *The Women Who Loved House Trailers*, she talks about the interlocking of cultures being an aspect of the new-wave oral tradition which she is trying to create (20). Hence, the process of claiming heritage functions more like a springboard for Glancy to engage with ideas which are more specific to larger purpose of healing, clarifying and creating through literature.

It becomes essential to point out that the creative and the critical co-exist in Glancy's works, thereby establishing her as a serious practitioner of the stage with the objective of restoring silent voices. Glancy's essays on Native American theatre explore the possibilities of representation on stage, and critically explore the conception of theatre in relation to the society and the community. Hence, Glancy's plays are not outputs of emotional turbulence, but carefully considered and crafted pieces.

Glancy's plays have also been criticized for using plots which cast a grim light on contemporary Native American life. The loss of tradition, nostalgia for the past, the breakdown of family dynamics, and broken relationships can be read in most of her plays. The sense of loss and the sense of nostalgia are particularly striking in the closing scenes of Glancy's plays, which have been criticized for their ambivalence. Eric Cheyfitz feels that her concluding scenes are frequently tinged with regret for the loss of traditional cultural practices, and the possibilities for recovery seem bleak. (306) Referring to the *Mother of Mosquitos*, he says that the setting of the play (in a village of ice in the far north of imagination) severs the masks from the community contexts, an

opinion which can be extended to the fire ceremony in *Stick Horse* as well. Such disjuncture, loss and cultural disintegration are constructs which seem to be reinforced in various aspects of her plays.

Firstly the criticism regarding her concluding scenes needs to be examined within the context of the plays. In the concluding scene of *Weebjob*, Weebjob makes some statements which put his transformation into perspective. He says:

WEEBJOB. Belief is a matter of will. I choose to believe. Yet I have seen
also the squash patch when the Thunder Hawk comes to me. You
don't believe because you don't choose to.

WILLIAM. I see no evidence of it. (81)

This statement by Weebjob can be construed as a form of resistance to a capitalist mode of thought, as evidenced in the response by William. While Weebjob is seen to be willing to make connections between the personal and the spiritual to evolve a system of belief based on faith, William resists such an idea due to his belief in rationality and his resistance to his father's ideological beliefs. Hence, it becomes easy to conclude that the play ends with no healing being engendered between the father and the son. However, the lines which follow dispute such a conclusion. Weebjob says:

I have felt Sweet Potato's anger too. I gave her life and made it bitter for
her. But now I want things healed between us. I was always too serious.
And with you James, I have not been serious enough. (PAUSE) I'll make
a new sign for the fence at highway 380: 'I have heard by hearing, but
now I see with my eyes, Job 42:5.' (82)

Though there is a distinct hint at some form of engagement with Christianity, Weebjob displays willingness to mend fences with his children and to make better efforts to understand their issues. This is obvious in his effort to translocate the Biblical saying from Job to his own location. Hence, the play ends on a note of hope and faith in the power of healing.

Towards the end of *Stick Horse*, Jake passes the ceremonial pipe to Eli, but the Spirit dancers pass it on to Quannah and Virgene, thereby indicating that Eli is still under their control. Another way of looking at this situation would be to conclude that Quannah and Virgene should assume the responsibility for healing Eli, since the ceremonial pipe is handed to them. Eli states at the end:

(THE SPIRIT-DANCERS LIFT ELI NEAR THE WINDOW, IN THE
MOON LIGHT THEY DANCE AND RODEO TOGETHER.) Round and
around. The people clapping. My father smiling. (THE SPIRIT-
DANCERS USE THE FENCE WIRE AS A CLOWN BARREL IN THE
RODEO, THEY WRAP IT AROUND ELI AND ROLL HIM AWAY).
(141)

It is clear that Eli is visualizing some form of a happier past when he had been at peace with his community and his father. In that sense, the play indeed ends on a note of nostalgia, proclaiming that Eli's healing lies in a reference to the past. However, the dramatic directions indicate that Eli is rolled away by the Spirits, thereby hinting that he has succumbed to alcohol. When Glancy stated that she had left the ending of *Stick Horse* as a 'left-to-the-reader' interpretation, she has in fact, moved the task of interpreting the meaning to the audience of her play. This is the only play of Glancy, in which she

included an afterword, probably out of the need to explicate the problem at the core of the play. While she points out her efforts to discuss the issue of alcoholism, which was the bane of the reservation life, she also explicates as to why she felt the need to leave the ending of the play as a 'left to the reader interpretation' because of the limited possibilities for survival. It is crucial to note that in her original play, she had meant for Eli to survive. She says in the Afterword, "The play *Stick Horse* is about healing from the disease of alcoholism through a sense of community and ritual. Family and hope. Positive thoughts"(142).

Yet another 'ambivalent' conclusion can be examined with reference to *Salvage*. In the final scene of the play, Wolf says to himself:

I look from the prison window through snow falling.

There's a figure walking in the distance –

I press my face to the glass –

She continues walking towards the gate.

Something's happening –

The snow falls in pieces of light –

I look at her again –

She comes to me wearing a white cardigan – a white cardigan covered with pearl buttons. (57)

The image of Memela in a white cardigan with pearl buttons is reminiscent of Wolf's memories of happier times. The conclusion is marked by a note of loss and nostalgia since Wolf is now confined to the prison, and the play has already established Memela as a woman who wants to get out of the mess engendered by Wolf's act of indiscretion.

However, the final image needs to be contextualized within the framework of the religious conflict, which is at the core of the play. Wolf's situation forces his father Wolfert and his wife Memela to reassess their faith in the respective spiritual systems. Hence, while Wolfert beats the drum he makes from an air filter to sing his son into the next world, Memela seems to be coming round to realizing the power of forgiveness. She says:

Has Mrs Stover been floating over our house, watching us, studying our sorrows, so she could let go of her anger? Is that what she has to do to continue her journey? ...I hear Mrs Stover choking on the stones of forgiveness. I am choking too. (55)

Though the aspect of death and revenge looms large, almost pushing the play to the brink of a psychological thriller, Glancy engages Memela and Wolfert in the process of making connections between the received knowledge of spirituality, and its exercise in real-life contexts. While Wolfert mourns the loss of tradition and religion, Memela has trouble in accommodating her Christian faith to her location as the wife of a man accused of murder. Glancy deliberately leaves the conclusion ambiguous after giving enough hints that Wolf has to seek succour only through his wife Memela, who in turn, should be able to forgive him of his hasty act. From this perspective, it is possible to discern that Glancy provides as adequate context for healing to be engendered.

The disjuncture, loss and cultural disintegration, which are at the core of many of Glancy's plays have an obvious sourcing in the colonial contact. For the Native Americans, colonial contact implied an encroachment into their lifestyle and patterns of living, which were based on a harmonious co-existence between man and Nature. For

example, in *The Truth Teller*, colonial contact exists in the form of maps and map making, which seem to reduce the importance assigned to the mystery of nature by defining it in terms of set limits. Similarly, in *The Best Fancy Dancer*, colonial contact is present in the form of an intractable influence on the life of the dislocated Native American youngsters, who are more attracted to cheerleading and gambling rather than assuming responsibility for their heritage. In *Segwohi* colonial contact can be discerned in the commoditization of the Native American artefacts and songs, which, in a way, prove to be a means of sustenance.

Hence the disjuncture, loss and cultural disintegration in Glancy's plays to which Cheyitz refers, is a byproduct of the colonial contact which is a historical fact. In her attempt to deal with the impact of such contact within a contemporary frame of reference, and to negotiate the tensional dialectic that sourced in the conflicts between the received and the acquired culture, Glancy tries to find points of connection which engender the survival of the characters in her plays. To refer to the instances cited above, in *The Truth Teller*, there is a reaffirmation in the heritage handed down by the ancients, especially when the Indian Man chooses to name his son as "He-who-sees-the-way". While the act of searching for a name in the dreams reaffirms the belief in the Native American custom, the nature of the name itself reveals that it will be possible to find a way amidst the cultural disconnect perceived by the Indian Woman. Similarly, in *The Best Fancy Dancer*, the closing lines by Jess indicate that the process of transculturation has enabled them to find a way to negotiate the dialectical tension between their received heritage and the contact culture. He says:

Maybe a little bit of new wave. Or Gertrude's K-Mart hard-country rock!
See the ocean beating against the New World shore. We don't know
where we're going. But we're going anyway. (EVERYONE CONTINUES
THE POW WOW DANCE) There's savages all around. And some of
them are us. But we got this message from two Worlds and we're coming
to our own. (JESS JERKS ON AN IMAGINARY SLOT MACHINE
HANDLE) Yes, we're coming into Home. (333)

In *Segwohi*, survival is engendered through a process of making winter counts, a tradition specific to Native American tribes. The process of making those murals brings Segwohi around to the realization that he may have been blind to Peyto, while Peyto says: "All right, old man, I'm going to work on your mural too. We look our separate directions, but we might be the same" (251). It is important to note that with the help of Sereh, Segwohi and Peyto attempt to bridge the gap between themselves – a gap that has further deepened due to the colonial contact. In that sense, the play indeed ends on a positive note.

Glancy's plays also have dysfunctional families and broken relationships at the core. In the case of dysfunctional families, instances of abuse are brought to the notice of the audience through recollections or narratives by other characters. In doing so, Glancy seems to be affirming that the need is for survival rather than a retreat into a not so pleasant past. For example, in *Bull Star*, Cicero informs the rest of the characters the cause of Lody's strange behaviour. He says:

I remember Lody in school. She would come with her hair uncombed.
She'd look at us like a wild animal. I think her mother was scaring her to

death. One day someone tormented her and she screamed out, I can still hear her down the hall as they carried her off. (162)

While hinting that Lody belonged to a dysfunctional family, the stress is obviously on Cicero's recollection of his defining image of Lody, rather than the factors contributing to the dysfunctionality in the family. Similarly, in *American Gypsy*, Glancy locates the silent voice of Ocholee amidst a dysfunctional family, when Peri narrates the incident of how Ocholee's father would leave her alone when she did something he didn't like. For Peri, Ocholee becomes representative of all the silent voices of her ancestors, whom she wants to access. Hence, Ocholee becomes a useful metaphor for Peri to examine the dysfunctionality at the core of her community itself. In *Jump Kiss*, there are enough indications that the family is dysfunctional, especially when the narrative voice says that each family member looked in a different direction. In *The Lesser Wars*, Coytoe's narration of a childhood incident reveals the cruelty of his father who ruled his children with ridicule. But the incident itself is only reported, not represented. Similarly, Oscar's troubled relationship with her father in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* is reported by Oscar to the rest of the women in the play. The source of the trouble is hinted at by Oscar in the following lines:

I wanted to be bread and my father made me a stone.

I wanted a gift and he gave me what I didn't want.

I took that stone and broke myself. Imagination came out. He gave me what he wouldn't have if he gave me bread. (29)

From the above lines, it can be sensed that the tension between the father and the daughters is sourced in his extremely catholic position on Christianity and the Bible.

Similarly, Jelly reports her experiences with her unsympathetic step mother, who had turned her out of her house after her father's death.

Glancy's plays are also peopled with single women, especially in the anthology *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays*, perhaps hinting at the non-sustainability of relationships in a larger sense. The Girl in *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*, is in search of an elusive idea of love on the highways and in the motels. The four women in *The Women Who Loved House Trailers* make limited references to relationships with members of the opposite sex, except for Jelly who refers to a relationship which could not be sustained. The narrative voice in *The Toad Must Have a Bite* is a woman in her fifties, who has been through a divorce. In *American Gypsy*, Peri's attempts are to define herself in isolation and not in relation to her dead husband Titomo. In *Jump Kiss*, the narrative voice has been through a divorce, just like Tecoyo in *The Lesser Wars*.

The perpetual reference to broken or dysfunctional families and relationships perpetuates the broken nature of Native American consciousness at a larger level. While the reservation life had resulted in various issues like alcoholism and breakdown of social institutions, the restrained access to language and culture ensured that Native Americans had limited connection to their spiritual systems of thought. However, it is to be noted that the act of brokenness functions only to mirror the systematic denigration of the Native American self. That is why in most of the plays, Glancy reports or hints at the causes for the dysfunction, rather than delineate them in their entirety. Her mission statement seems to be the recovery of the spiritual aspect of one's personality amidst the broken fragments of Native American consciousness. Hence, the act of brokenness, both

at the structural and the thematic level, functions as a springboard for the dramatist to embed messages of hope and survival within the disrupted discourse of the plays.

Another aspect of her work that has attracted criticism is her missionary zeal and recourse to the Christian model of conversion and assimilation which necessarily involves a 'disease model' of Native experience¹⁵, especially with reference to her engagement with the Christian processes of salvation. Robe sees Christianity as 'devastating' for Native American tribes because it attacked their values.

However, James Mackay feels that the Christian thread which runs through her work is evangelical in its aspect. He says, "Breaking the neck of fear, breaking the neck of self-willed silence, escaping some form of oppressive atmosphere seems to be near the core of the author's faith" (*Salt Companion* 3). Such a view is further supported by Glancy's simultaneous engagement with Native American history and culture, while declaring that "the sacred hoop of Native American culture was broken because it wasn't the sacred hoop of God" (*Claiming Breath* 97).

It becomes necessary to locate Glancy's own religious affiliations before resolving the issues regarding conversion and assimilation in her plays. While drawing a fundamental difference between the Baptists and the Catholics, Glancy finds Christianity to be a working religion precisely because of the correspondences which it shares with Native American idea of faith. Moreover, at a very personal level, Christianity helped her to understand her own Indian history. She admits that her understanding of her Indian heritage was helped a great deal by her Christian faith. A similar processing of faith can be observed in her plays as well, where there is a definite influence of the Christian element. However, it is crucial to point that her plays are less of the 'disease models' as

can be assumed by the processes referring to salvation. There are no instances of conversion or assimilation, which can be gleaned from her plays. Her case is more for survival, and in that sense, her characters parallel her own journey of understanding their heritage against the colonial influence of Christianity. Hence, Christianity is seen as an engendering construct in her plays.

Instances like those referring to Oscar's rigid father who had been a Reverend, or Weebjob's experiences in the reservation schools are instances of colonial encounter which encouraged punitive measures. What emerges in Glancy's plays is the attempt to understand one's location in the sociocultural matrix using religion as a construct for generating a conflation of perspectives. For example, the message from Mrs Stover in *Salvage* is actually a result of Memela dwelling on significant teachings from the Bible in conjunction with Wolfert's exhortations on the power of the Spirits. In *Jump Kiss*, the idea of crucifixion actually functions as a regenerative context for healing, albeit its association with violence and bloodshed.

When we examine the syncretic nature of Glancy's discourse and the transcultural model of appropriation, it becomes clear that Glancy's specific engagement is with cultural differences and points of interconnectedness. Her transreligious position is reflected in the following statement in *Claiming Breath* – "our humanness is the same whatever the ethnic group. We just have different medicines for carrying those differences" (62). It is possible to trace similar instances in the plays, where Glancy strives to create space for a larger sense of spiritual understanding rather than group the specific religious orientations.

It can be observed that the 'necessary conflict' is actually creation by the conception of culture. In Glancy's plays, this can be perceived in the manner in which conflicts are sourced in the sociocultural collisions. The cultural aspect of the conflict actually helps the playwright to examine crucial issues like role appropriation and relocation of tradition and ritual, empowerment and survival within the context of the plays.

The negotiation of such conflicts happens through a revisioning of the social fabric which necessarily involves an accommodation of the Christian element of religion into the Native American conception of spirituality. By default, such an accommodation implies a re-visioning of the social fabric itself, in terms of role appropriation and the relocation of tradition and ritual. For example, when Tecoyo symbolically guillotines herself so that she can be a part of Coytoe, Glancy is not just recollecting the ancient trickster story of one arm maiming another, but also restoring Tecoyo to her original role of Warrhameh. It is also possible to locate patterns of crucifixion in this act of subsuming one's self. The accompanying violence is symptomatic of Christ's death on the cross. However, the idea of regeneration of Christ embeds a message of healing and hope within the sudden and the disjunctured act of Tecoyo. Similarly, the social fabric of Native American consciousness undergoes a revisioning when the Girl in *The Woman Who Was A Red Deer*, states assertively that she is now sewing her own deer dress. While the act of slapping her Grandmother hints at the necessary violence for the regeneration to happen, her own salvation comes when she recognizes the dynamic aspect of the 'deer dress'. When Weebjob assents to Sweet Potato's wedding and allows Sweet Grass to assume control of the wedding ceremony, he has accommodated a revisioning in his

social fabric. He has now integrated a perspective which provides a greater visibility to the women of his house. Hence, culture creates the necessary context for the conflicts, which are negotiated through an accommodation in the social fabric,. Such accommodations function as sites for survival in Glancy's plays.

It can be perceived that the stories that Glancy tells in her plays belong to individuals who are forced to transform their perspectives on life. Weebjob makes peace with his family by negotiating the correlated idea of his "squash patch"; Memela in *Salvage*, moves towards the idea of compassion and forgiveness while dealing with a husband who has committed a hate crime; the Girl in *The Woman Who Was Dressed for a Deer Dance* is empowered by culture and history when she understands the personalized location of the 'deer dress' and the power it exerts over her life. In the process, it often emerges that identity has a processual and a performative aspect, which emerges in the interstices created by sociocultural collisions. It emerges not in the context of the 'greater wars' which happen in the economy and between nations, but the 'lesser wars' which as Glancy puts it, "explore the risks of relationship with the other, the risk of knowing self, and the risk of relationship with the structure of writing" (*American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* 145). As an outcome of such a process of "constant quarrel" with one's self against a fragmented sociocultural context, a multiplicity of voices, sourced in the personal and the generational emerge. Treading her steps amidst such voices, Glancy tries to engender routes of connection between them, because therein lies the potential for survival tempered by hope and healing.

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(Appendix) An Interview with Diane Glancy

1. Is there a social message in your plays, or do you write to convey a social message?

I write to convey a story with a heart and a range of human emotion. Personal responsibility is a message, but not the whole story. It's more of an undercurrent. For a long time, native plays idealized the Native American as the noble savage, such as Sacajawea in *STONE HEART*, who seemed know more than Lewis & Clark, with whom she traveled on their 2004-06 Corps of Discovery. Often native plays blamed the white culture for their mishaps, loss, alcoholism and poverty. Then the plays began taking responsibility, such as *SALVAGE*, when Wolf realizes he is at fault and must be responsible for his own actions. The third stage in the development of native playwriting is the native play that hardly looks native. Currently, I'm working on a new play, *THE BIRD HOUSE*, which is

about a minister in a dwindling church in Ropesville, Texas. The church is a form of the reservation. The diminishing returns, loss of congregation and revenue Reverend Hawk experiences are familiar to the Native American.

2. Do you think that the use of the trickster figure with its fluidity and supernatural qualities was more enabling in conveying a social message?

No, because to me a social message is more rigid. It says, this is the way it should be. There is little relativity or changeability in a social message that is an ear-mark of the trickster. I think the trickster seems anti-social. He's more for the trickster than others.

3. How would you differentiate between your heritage and your culture?

To me heritage is something that comes from parents, grandparents, etc. Culture is what I have chosen from myself. In my case, my culture is hybrid, coming from several sources. It is a combination I have made on my own. My heritage is European (mother) and Native American (father). My heritage is the work ethic. We are middle-of-the-road people, my mother would say, therefore don't-rock-the-boat. My parents came from farm life. Their parents were poor. My mother and father came to Kansas City, Missouri, from Kansas and Arkansas in the late 1920's. They met, married, achieved and maintained a middle-class life style. We had a house and a car. I was educated and was expected to carry on their

values, which I have done to some extent, but my life went beyond what they imagined for me. Neither of them lived to see me become a professor and published writer. My life hasn't been as middle-of-the-road as theirs, though I am basically a conservative and have many of their values. Now, in my later years, more so.

My culture, on the other hand, is my work, which has centered around education, books, writing, travel for research, and more work. My children are 47 and 43. I have four grandchildren. I am at a time in my life where things are certainly easier.

4. You mention 'the empty space between heritages' –in *Claiming Breath*. Do you think that cultural compromises have to happen while moving between two heritages and that which one to pick and which one to drop is decided by a person's underlying spiritual framework? Would it mean that spirituality is more fundamental than culture?

There is a great difference between my two cultures. The empty space between them is still there, but it's one I've filled through writing. I just published my fifth collection of nonfiction, *THE DREAM OF A BROKEN FIELD*, and it is still about the space between two cultures. The dream of a broken field, by the way, is to bear crops. That's why the topsoil of a field is broken. I've written mostly about my native heritage, but the responsibility, goal-oriented, workaholic white culture is there too.

Yes, compromises have to be made. I cannot live as a traditional Native American because I wasn't raised with the tradition. Neither can I be white because I have native blood. The land, spiritual values, importance of family and language are through the native side.

5. In handling cultures in your plays and the movement between them, have you had to portray through your characters that one was better than the other?

Do you mean the European and the Native American? Both cultures have their strength and weaknesses. Surely, from my mother, who was of German and English descent, I received purpose and groundedness, punctuality and reliability. I've been going through some of my old papers to clean up a bit, and I was looking at some old report cards that said, "Diane hasn't missed a day of school." My mother was very insistent of regular attendance. Somewhere I wrote, "We weren't allowed to get sick." My mother was directed toward a goal. I have some of that same determination. My father, on the other hand, was tidy and responsible also, but he thought more of the reasoning and process of achievement, rather than the finished task as the achievement itself. That was my mother. What we were underneath didn't matter, as long as we were moving forward. I could have been dying inside, but as long as I was in my seat in the classroom, that was all that mattered.

Or do you mean, when I write pan-Indian plays, I write across native tribes and cultures, from Crow to Cherokee to Mohawk, etc., is one better than the other?

No. The tribes are vastly different in language root, custom, religion, world-view etc.

6. To what extent do you see the interconnectedness of cultures as the means of survival?

In my case, it has been important because I had to find the stepping stones between two different cultures to make sense of them both. It has been a long occupation.

7. You have once stated in an interview that you find the traditional definitions of feminism quite limiting. How do your women characters break the confines of such limitations?

I can't remember the context. But maybe it was that definitions are very limiting. If I am a feminist, I have to follow the feminist rules. But to be a whole person, true to one's inner landscape, I have to find my own interiority that determines direction, and not some outward definition put on one's behavior from the outside.

8. How useful do you find your concept of 'she-donism' to portray the empowerment of women in your plays?

I find it useful. It's strange—the paradox of strength / weakness. I've relied on both. It is helpful as a Christian to know that Christ paid the price for my

salvation by his death on the cross. I am weak but he is strong, is a child's song sung in Sunday school. Yet, I have been on my own after a divorce 30 years ago, and I am not afraid of much anymore. I have had difficulties of facing the hard, economically-driven world, especially in the early days when I first began making my way on my own with two children to support.

9. Your empowered women characters derive their identity and empowerment from their spiritual fabric and use it to deal with their conflicts and transitions. Do you believe that spiritually grounded women generate more enabling and fulfilling empowerment in other women?

Yes, I do. I think life is hard and it takes faith to survive with quality.

Christianity is much derided in America, especially in academic circles. But I knew that life was up against something bigger than I was, and I needed outside help, which my faith has provided.

10. How is history integrated into your plays? Why and how is it significant and crucial for your drama?

I've always like to write about historical voices that did not have a chance to speak. So history is important. I integrate history in all the genres I write, from Sacajawea in *STONE HEART* to Kateri Tekakwitha in *THE REASON FOR CROWS*, both of which are plays written from novels.

11. Do you consider your whole process of writing plays as akin to a Native American ceremony, something like a Sweat Lodge for example?

Yes, writing is a ceremony. One that is rigorous. A sweat lodge requires discomfort, endurance, and a suffering of sort for a certain end. It is a spiritual pilgrimage to find both myself and the characters I'm writing about.

12. In the introduction to the *Salt Companion*, James Mackay has stated that the thread of Christian faith which runs in your work is presented in its most evangelical form. How would you respond to this with reference to your plays?

I think he's right. In *SALVAGE*, Memela has a strong faith. In *THE REASON FOR CROWS*, Kateri's whole concern is her faith.

13. In your plays, which literary elements lend themselves better than others in portraying spiritual conflicts and cultural transitions?

I think it takes all of them because oral tradition basically incorporates all the elements—the fiction of myth and story, the imagistic way of native speaking with the poetry of language, the drama of the speaking voice during story-telling, the nonfiction of personal experience. A native play still bears the residue of oral tradition, which was the ancestor's plays.

13. In the later plays, especially those like *The Collector of a Three-Cornered Postage Stamp*, I sense that you are trying to break the confines of stage, structure and narrative, by making voice as the primary agent which carries the narrative.

What has been the impact of such a narrative as far as production has been concerned, especially since it defies the traditional construction of drama?

Native Voices at the Autry, which has produced three of my plays, JUMP KISS, STONE HEART and SALVAGE has steered me away from the voice alone. I'm now working on a fourth play with them, THE BIRDHOUSE, and it's the same story. I hear them say, Get the characters working on stage in an interchange of emotion and dialogue that carries the play forward. The western standard of playwriting prevails for them. I use my experimental work for other venues, such as the & Now Writing Conference where I presented TOOTH last fall.

14. What are some of the innovations which you are considering for your future plays?

I tried to experiment with form, but the words on the page are not important. A play is an oral presentation. The written script is a blueprint for what happens on the stage. That is what is primary. I wrote the REASON FOR CROWS in two panels: I had Kateri's words on one side of the page and the priests on the other to show the two separate worlds in which they lived. But it had no influence on the way the play was performed on stage. It seemed a waste of time. I decided to use innovation with form in my fiction and nonfiction where the reader could see the experimentation.

In a recent short piece, TOOTH, that I mentioned above, I used clay figures in a video presentation while I read the words. It is an imaginary piece

about my voice and another voice that rode on mine. I wrote it when I was at the Alaska Native Heritage Center in Anchorage. Another voice seemed to enter my thoughts telling their story about the early days in Alaska and the arrival of the missionaries.