

**Acculturation, Myth and Human Relations in the Gypsy Plays of  
Diane Glancy: A Critical Study**



**A Synopsis**

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## **Acculturation, Myth and Human Relations in the Gypsy Plays of Diane Glancy: A Critical Study**

### **1. Introduction**

Native American Literature also known as Indian Literature or American Indian Literature begins with the indigenous groups of America in the tradition of oral form. Traditional Native American Literature includes ancient hieroglyphic and pictographic writing and an extensive set of folktales, myths, and oral histories. The Native American culture is known for its rich oral tradition. Instead of using a written language to document their history, these indigenous people simply relied on their verbal language to share their history, customs, rituals, and legends through vivid narratives. These stories usually were told orally, and acted out with dancing, music, and other performance. It was not considered literature due to its oral tradition. According to dominant western culture, *'only written texts were considered literature'*. Arnold Krupat an editor for Native American literature for the Norton Anthology of American Literature explains *'we might begin by noting that historically literature was simply the term for whatever language western cultures deemed important enough to preserve by means of technology of writing'*. Under this perspective, Native Americans were illiterate, only used the spoken word and were unable to develop a written culture.

The written Native American literary tradition, including European literary genres such as poetry and fiction began in the early eighteenth century as Native American began to publish their historical and cultural account during the nineteenth century. From the 1960s onwards, the production of many new Native American Literary texts created an era of awakening that created a new voice and a new place for Native American writers in the American imagination. This era is called the Native American Renaissance by literary critics.

### **Native American Theater**

Though Contemporary Native American Theatre had a significant amount of scholarship to be called a mature genre of literature but it did not receive recognition till the half of 20<sup>th</sup> century. In the real sense, it started to flourish after the rise of Civil Rights

Movement during the 1960s and 1970s and the failure of Vietnam War. It was developed from oral culture and literature primarily intended to 'educate, entertain and preserve' new generations of the Native Americans. Its origins are traced back to the oral tradition. It has travelled a long path and had a history of silencing, oppression, displacement, and controversy to be recognized as a genre. Lynn Riggs a playwright of Cherokee descent brought Native American Theatre into the spotlight through the Six Nation Reserve Forest Theatre in Ontario. Through these events, Native American Theater has been introduced to mainstream society and contemporary Native American Theatre was born.

The American Indian Theatre Ensemble, was founded in 1972 by a 26-year-old, Oklahoma-born, Kiowa-Delaware man named Hanay Geiogamah. Later, the group changed its name to American Indian Theatre Ensemble in 1973 and took off preventing Native Americans in their terms through drama. The troupe worked tirelessly over the next several years to create and perform original plays. The American Indian Theatre Ensemble resolved not only to rectify the cultural image of the Native American but also to produce a body of drama intended primarily for the Indian community. Contemporary Native American Theatre becomes a literary genre that provided an opportunity for the American Indians to present their own stories on stage and in writing. Contemporary Native American male/female playwrights such as Lynn Riggs, Diane Glancy, Jim Northrup, Hanay Geiogamah, E. Donald Two-Rivers, Linda Hogan, William S. Yellow Robe, Jr., LeAnne Howe, and Larissa FastHorse tried to shake themselves free from a stereotypical image and misperceptions created by Euro-American writers and create realistic characters conceived from their personal experiences.

### **A definition and meaning of Acculturation**

'Acculturation' is a process through which a person or group from one culture comes to adopt the practices and values of another culture while still retaining their own distinct culture. Foster defines the term "*acculturation as the process of bringing previously separated and disconnected culture into contact with one another*". This process is most commonly discussed regarding a minority culture adopting elements of the majority culture, as is typically the case with immigrant groups that are culturally or ethnically distinct from the majority in the place to which they have immigrated. The United States of America is a society of multi-culture and multi-ethnic where the white race is dominating one. A large population of Native Americans engages in adapting to the norms of dominant US culture

while trying to retain the norms of Native American ethnic culture. Diane Glancy focuses on theme of acculturation in her plays published as *American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays* (2012)

### **A concept of Myth**

Mythology plays an important part in Native American religion. Creation myths—stories that explain how their tribe came to be—are one of the most well-known for Native American tribes. In creating and sharing these myths people were able to explain everyday natural occurrences, as well as their own beginnings. Collins English Dictionary defines myth as “*A myth is a well-known story which was made up in the past to explain natural events or to justify religious beliefs or social customs*”. These myths speak to the importance of storytelling in Native American culture as well as to the individuality of the tribe and its beliefs. They show their respect for ancient wisdom, and how nature played an important and reverential role. Diane Glancy uses a *mélange* of voices to invoke the myths and realities of modern Native American life. The old-aged characters from her plays keep telling the mythological stories of their ancestors to young generations to shape the present world.

### **Human relationship in the plays of Diane Glancy**

A theme of human relationships has been found in the plays of Diane Glancy. As belonging to a multi-culture and multi-ethnic society, she believes that unity in society is exactly like a piece of cloth that is very difficult to unravel. It holds together tenaciously, its threads close to one another, forming a strong unified whole. Diane Glancy along with other playwrights, belonging to different ethnicities, repeatedly warn Americans about the consequences of neglecting the essential unity of the fabric of society. Through her works, she often writes about the ways of bridging the differences to live in one harmonic society.

**Diane Glancy** (1941- ) is a Native American poet, author, and playwright whose works depend upon Native American life and how traditional values and ways of life are connected and juxtaposed with those of modern America. She presents stories that concentrate on the rich and carried oral traditions of her people, usually switching narrative voices to create a vivid and living tapestry of Native life. She tackles a richly mosaic of topics, including ethnic and religious identity, gender, alcoholism, family relationships, conflict between lovers, incest, colonial history, and tribal stories or myths.

The present research work attempts a critical and analytical study of Diane Glancy's six plays published in "*American Gypsy: Six Native American Plays*" (2002). The six plays included, "*The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance*," "*The Women Who Loved House Trailers*," "*American Gypsy*," "*Jump Kiss*," "*Lesser Wars*," and "*The Toad (Another Name for the Moon) Should Have a Bite*,"

## **2. Review of Literature:**

Sean J. Flynn in "*Without Reservation: Benjamin Reifel and American Indian Acculturation*" (2018) offers an alternative to depictions of American Indians as victims of eighteenth- and nineteenth century conquest. Contributing to a long-neglected topic in American Indian studies--the lives of twentieth-century American Indians--Flynn showcases the life of a man who prospered in the American mainstream without forsaking his racial identity.

A Ph.D. (2012) thesis entitled "*Culture conflict and social fabric a study of Diane Glancy's select plays*" was submitted by Savitha. C to the University of Hyderabad focuses on the exploration of various aspects of Diane Glancy's plays. This includes structural elements, traditional elements, and social elements.

A Ph.D. (2016) thesis entitled "*Conflict and Reconciliation: Representations of Christianity in Contemporary Native American Literature by Women*" was submitted by Rachel Luckenbill to Duquesne University, highlights the influence of Christianity on Native American Society.

Prof Sabah Atallah Diyai's research article entitled "*Harmony of the Fabric of Society in Diane Glancy's The Woman Who Was a Red Deer Dressed for the Deer Dance*" discusses harmony and fabric society present in the Diane Glancy's plays.

## **3. Objectives of the Research:**

The main purpose of this research work is to focus on the issues like acculturation, myth, and human relation as reflected in the plays of Diane Glancy. The researcher has framed the following as the objectives of the study.

1. To study the historical background of Native American Literature
2. To overview the history of Native American Drama
3. To focus on the culture and acculturation of Native American society.

4. To study critically and analyze selected plays of Diane Glancy.
5. To analyze Diane Glancy as a major voice of Native American Society.
6. To find out mythical element and human relationship in the selected plays of Diane Glancy.

#### **4. The hypotheses of the Study:**

- The United States of America is known for its diversity of language, culture, religion, and ethnicity. Native American is indigenous groups spread across different parts of America. They follow their own unique culture different from other dominant cultures. They have retained social, cultural, economic, and political characteristics that are distinct from those of the dominant societies in which they live. Despite their cultural differences, a large population of Native Americans engages in adapting to the norms of dominant US culture while trying to retain the norms of Native American ethnic culture. The study explores in-depth the acculturation of Native Americans, the use of myth, and human relations as they are important in the Native American Culture and also reflected in the plays of Diane Glancy.

#### **5. Research Methodology:**

This research work is critical and analytical in nature. To achieve the above objectives, the following methodologies of the research will be followed. The proposed study will be carried out within the theoretical framework of critical and analytical studies.

- The researcher will be analyzing, examining, discussing, and doing a close and critical reading of the selected primary and secondary sources..
- The proposed research attempts to consult the source data related to the selected research work.
- Data will be collected from the journal articles, reference books, publications, magazines, reports, records, interviews, internet, newspaper, E-sources such as e-books; e-journals, etc will be used for the completion of the proposed study.

#### **6. Significance of the Study:**

Native American has a long history of telling stories through oral tradition that included singing, chanting, and poetry. The indigenous people started telling stories of

emergence, creation, journey, quest, heroism, and trickery. Native American Literature reflects the culture, history and contemporary issues of the people who are indigenous to what is now the United States. Their literature and voices remained suppressed for a long period of time due to not having a written tradition of conveying their experiences to the outside world. The present research study will be providing an opportunity for the students, readers, research scholars, and academicians to have a glimpse into the world of Native American.

## **7. Tentative Chapter Scheme**

Chapter I- Introduction

Chapter -II- Acculturation: A Critical Reading of the Plays

Chapter- III –Use of Myth: A Critical Reading of the Plays

Chapter- IV- Reflection of Human Relationship: A Critical Reading of the Plays

Chapter -V-Conclusion

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